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North Carolina Folklore Journal

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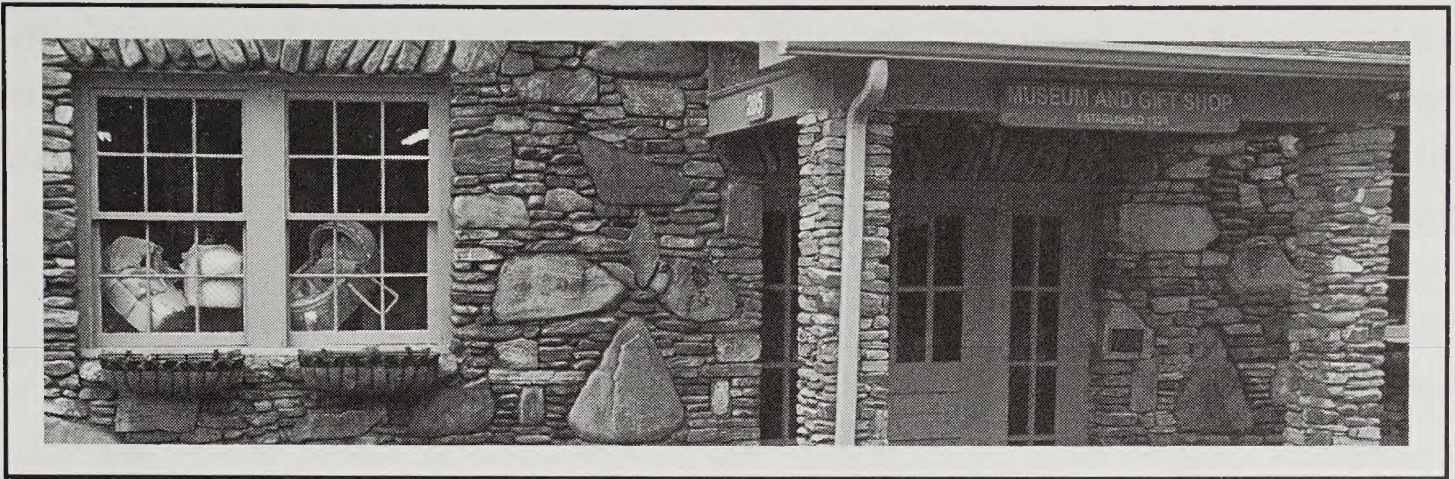
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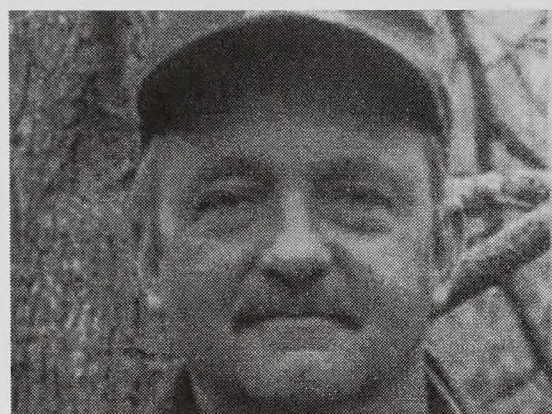
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by Ken Tart.



**A TREE ACCURST
BOBBY McMILLON
AND STORIES OF
FRANKIE SILVER
DANIEL W. PATTERSON**

The University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill & London

NEWS FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Let's Talk About It: How Folklife Crafts Our Literature, Lives and Communities

By Melanie Miller

The rich folklife of North Carolina has inspired many authors in a wide range of writing styles, from fiction to autobiography. In recent years, the North Carolina Folklore Society has collaborated with the North Carolina Center for the Book and the North Carolina Humanities Council to develop a program called "How Folklife Crafts Our Literature, Lives, and Communities," a new "Let's Talk About It" reading and discussion series that is designed to use the North Carolina communities and traditions depicted in these books to help readers better imagine and empathize with a range of human experiences. Folklore scholars are facilitating discussion sessions with local library patrons on a variety of books that address topics of place, community, and identity. The series is intended to expose readers to aspects of North Carolina's culture and heritage that they might not otherwise encounter, and to offer fresh ways for participants to explore and discuss their own cultures and heritage.

In response to the growing diversity of its members' interests, the NCFS has begun to envision new directions and organizational strategies. One of its key strategic goals is to develop events to connect

Melanie Miller, a graduate of the UNC-Chapel Hill's Curriculum in Folklore, is program coordinator of the North Carolina Folklore Society.

Frame Photo: Section of the title page of a University of North Carolina Press book read in the "Let's Talk About It" series.

professional folklorists with new audiences. To reach out to new partners and to help the public learn more about how folk traditions shape their lives, cultures, and literature, the Society developed this reading and discussion series with funding from the NC Humanities Council and in collaboration with Frances Ashburn of the North Carolina Center for the Book. This series is part of a larger, well-established program—"Let's Talk About It"—which is sponsored by the North Carolina Center for the Book and the North Carolina Humanities Council, and which was originally developed by the American Library Association. In February 2005, NCFS convened a committee of folklife scholars to develop the initial concept for this program. Members of the planning committee included Dr. Thomas McGowan, Dr. Beverly Patterson, Dr. Cece Conway, Dr. Sally Peterson, Dr. Patricia Sawin, Barbara Lau, Joyce Joines Newman, and Molly Matlock Parsons. This committee selected five readings that, based on advice from the NC Center for the Book, would be widely available to participating libraries and that would stimulate critical analysis and discussion. The committee chose books about North Carolina that they believed would represent a diverse sampling of traditional forms, geographic settings, historical time periods, and ethnic and cultural affiliations.

The pilot program was tested in three libraries with strong attendance in reading and discussion programs, including the Haywood County Public Library in Waynesville, the Carteret County Public Library in Beaufort, and the Davie County Public Library in Mocksville. The pilot program was well-received by libraries and their patrons and enthusiastically supported by folklorists.

"How Folklife Crafts Our Literature, Lives, and Communities" invites participants to explore the ways that North Carolina authors employ folk communities and traditions to develop character, imagery, setting, drama, and a sense of place. The books were selected to include a variety of writing styles, including historical fiction, mystery, autobiography, and non-fiction, as well as themes of place, family, ethnicity, and community.

A Tree Accurst is folklorist Daniel Patterson's collaboration with singer and storyteller Bobby McMillon. It explores the artistic, historical, and social significance of the ballads and tales of Frankie Silver—a woman executed in Burke County in 1833 for the murder of her husband—and the ways in which the legends and ballads surrounding the Silver case still influence the identities of people living in the community where the crime occurred so long ago.

Set in Robeson County, Josephine Humphrey's historical fiction novel *Nowhere Else on Earth* builds on this theme of what makes a place a place, and the events that make communities unique. Humphreys examines how geography; natural resources; ethnicity; community tradition and identity; technology and industry; and the Civil War all converged to create the drama of Lumbee heroine, Rhoda Strong.

Dorothy Spruill Redford's memoir *Somerset Homecoming* also deals with the significance of place. The book documents her search for her roots, a search that results in her uncovering connections to enslaved ancestors on Somerset Plantation in eastern North Carolina. Spruill Redford explores what happens when heritage, tradition, and community connection are annihilated. Her project propelled her to find, contact, and reunite with other Somerset descendants, reconnecting a community long disbanded. For many members of this community, her actions helped transform a place representing pain and prejudice into a place that could provide comfort as it also transcended anonymity, the pain of racial prejudice, and oppression.

Folklorist Barbara Lau's *From Cambodia to Greensboro: Tracing the Journeys of New North Carolinians* explores the riveting tales and rich traditions of a little-known North Carolina immigrant community. By presenting their personal narratives and cultural practices, Lau enables non-Cambodian readers to regard these neighbors in a much fuller light. Readers are invited to consider the staggering risks Cambodians experienced in order to come here, as well as the challenges they face as they navigate a dramatically different environment full of unfamiliar customs. This book is particularly important since little literature has been written about such new North Carolina populations.

Set in the Piedmont, *Uncommon Clay*, a murder mystery by Raleigh author Margaret Maron, illustrates how folklife adopts new forms in order to adapt to economic change and pressure, specifically how the arts market influenced North Carolina's pottery traditions. In the case of Seagrove and Piedmont pottery, forms that were once purely functional became almost completely aesthetic in response to the closing of one commercial market and the creation of another.

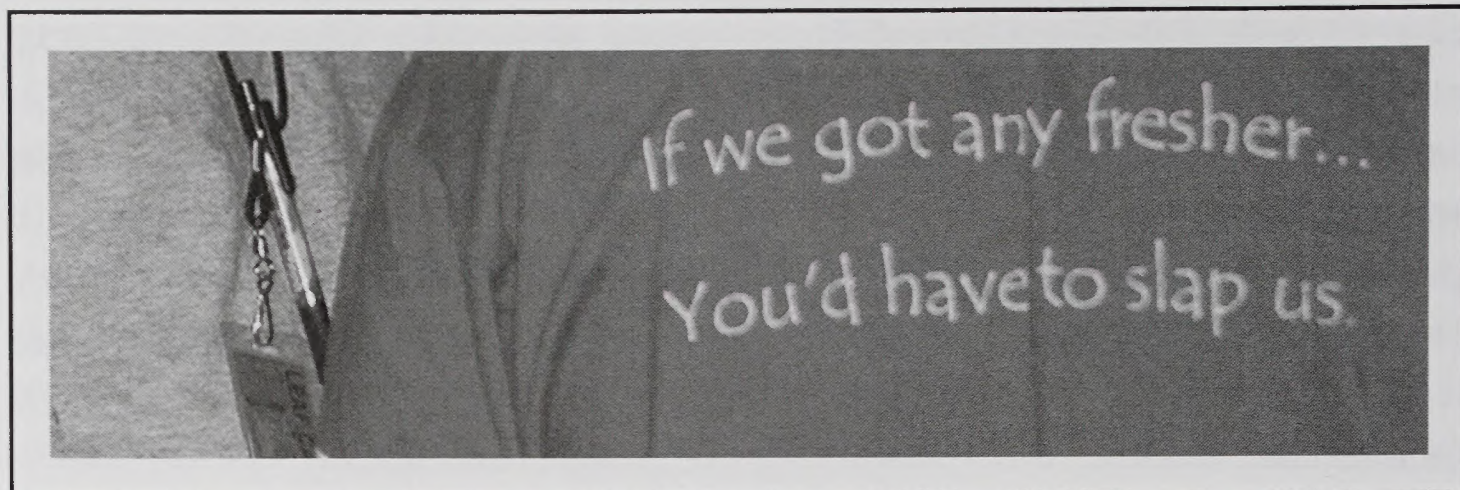
The Let's Talk About It program aims to stimulate critical conversations that engage folklorists and community members in dialogues about the role of folklife in shaping our perception of traditional expressive culture shared among various groups in North

Carolina and in the United States more generally. Discussions help attendees understand that folklife does not only encompass what is antiquated, what is rural, or what is fictional or superstitious. It is not something that belongs only to the "Other." Though built on the past and shaped by it, folklife is vital, relevant, fluid, and ever present. It provides a window into understanding our universal humanity, as it manifests itself in a wide range of creative and symbolic forms such as custom, belief, technical skill, language, literature, art, architecture, music, play, dance, drama, ritual, pageantry, and handicraft. Participants consider the significance of the fact that these expressions are mainly learned orally, by imitation, or in performance and are generally maintained without benefit of formal instruction or institutional direction.

By exploring the dynamics of these issues on the ethnographic and creative levels, attendees gain an expanded view of how studying folklife traditions can lend us greater appreciation for the world around us. As participants begin to realize the power inherent in efforts to preserve group traditions, and as they celebrate indigenous knowledge and analyze history through the lens of community, they will be enabled to tackle their daily efforts and interactions more thoughtfully, more effectively, and with greater tools for resolving conflict and misunderstanding.

This program is helping the North Carolina Folklore Society develop relationships with public libraries across the state as it contributes to the appreciation of folklife by new audiences. This series also helps to promote trained folklorists and the North Carolina Folklore Journal as significant sources of information about folklife traditions and scholarship in North Carolina.

More information about "Let's Talk About It" is available on the North Carolina Humanities Council website at <www.nchumanities.org/ltai.html>. If you are interested in leading discussion groups with the "Let's Talk About It" program, contact Carolyn Allen at the North Carolina Center for the Humanities, (336) 256-0140 or callen@nchumanities.org.



The Folklore of Food at the Lake Eden Arts Festival

By Paul Denkenberger

In the fall of 2005 I began a job in the kitchen of the semi-annual Lake Eden Arts Festival (LEAF). Through my friendship with the Head Chef and General Manager of the LEAF Cafe, James “Oso” Wallman, I am privy to a side of LEAF that many visitors and staff do not witness. The contracted vendors operate in tents, in full view of all who wish to see, but the massive dining hall and stage area that comprises Eden Hall houses a kitchen that is closed off from the rest of the festival. This article provides a quick glimpse behind the swinging doors of the Eden Hall kitchen into the “how” and “whys” of a facility that feeds more than 3000 people during a three-day music and arts festival outside of Asheville, North Carolina.

In her book *Art, Culture and Cuisine*, Phyllis Pray Bober describes food as one of the most privately defining and publicly socializing proclivities that we as humans possess. Nevertheless, we live in a grab-and-go-chain-store society where the quality of the food that we eat is often ignored. Jennifer Pickering, the founder of the Lake Eden Arts Festival, understood that cuisine is a big part of the Asheville artistic community and that LEAF ought to be fueled by the best food this side of a white table cloth, with options and prices closer to a buffet.

The LEAF Cafe, in Eden Hall, is the incarnation of that ideal. Currently at the epicenter of that entity is Oso. The mono-moniker, *Paul Denkenberger is an undergraduate student at Western Carolina University with an interest in ethnomusicology.*

Frame photograph: Festival ID tags and volunteer's T-shirt back at 2006 Lake Eden Arts Festival. Photograph by Ted Coyle.



A view of Eden Hall from the beach, May 2006. Photo by Ted Coyle.

“Oso,” is a derivation of a nickname given to him by an old friend. “Osito” is Spanish for “Little Bear.” The reason for the alias is two-fold. The first is that in kitchens there may be anywhere from one to seven “James’s” or “Jims.” The other more personal reason being that Oso is somewhat bearish in look and personality. Osito turns to Oso, and we have a name for a man that can be described in “oh, so” many ways. He is the Operations Manager of the Eden Hall Dining Facility. He designs the weekend menu, consisting of eight meals, each with six or seven entree items, plus salad and dessert. The kitchen produces anywhere from forty-eight to fifty-six individual items, each prepared in quantities sufficient to feed 200-300 people. His job includes ordering all of the ingredients and creating the timetable for mixing them together. He sets prices to ensure that diners are getting the most for their money, and that the festival does not lose out. Oso also oversees the largest staff in the entire festival, consisting of four returning, paid employees and approximately 120 volunteers. This diversity and size is what is most impressive; all of these people come together for less than two weeks per festival in order to create a festival dining experience unlike any other.

The problem with writing about something as intricate as LEAF is that speaking with, or about, every single person who is important to the operation is nearly impossible. Cody Stokes is the “right hand man” to Oso in Eden Hall, but he is also head of the Belly of Buddha Café, which handles performer hospitality food. Stacey Tortelloutte is the point-of-purchase manager, sales manager, and all around service-side manager for the Eden Hall Buffet Lines. Brian Evans, who



A volunteer prepares catfish at the Lake Eden Arts Festival, May 2006.
Photo by Ted Coyle.

specializes in vegan baked goods, makes cakes, muffins, pastries and desserts to accompany every meal. And finally, there is me, Paul Denkenberger. I am responsible for a separate food line for staff and performers only, so that they can get served faster, since they often have only a few moments between check-ins, shows, shifts or bus rides. Then, of course, there is the enormous staff of volunteers, many of whom return year after year. It is safe to say that were it not for the continuous efforts of these people, the LEAF experience would suffer.

Adding to the diversity are the guest chefs. LEAF has hosted chefs from as far away as Ivory Coast, Africa and as close the local grocery store. Each of the guest chefs brings a taste of the culture or region from which they hail. This gives patrons of the LEAF Cafe a chance to sample a dish from the African continent one night, and one from Avery County the next. Each dish is prepared as authentically as possible by the chef. All the bodies, equipment and food that come together to create these meals can make the kitchen an exciting place to be.

If we peek inside for a moment we see that things can get pretty crazy. The doorway between the main hall and the kitchen provides a perfect view of all the action. Small pockets of two to four people are scattered about the various stations. The staff is busy peeling,

chopping, portioning, cleaning, and talking. To the right is a table where Cody has laid out the white board and is preparing a list of items that need to be prepped for the following day's meals. Past him at another table there are two volunteers rolling veggie wraps and loading them onto trays. To our left is a shorter table where four volunteers are chopping kale into bite-sized pieces and placing it into plastic bags. From the far end of the room comes the sound of pans clanging in and out of the sink. Closer to the door, the distinctive "pop" of a knife finishing its cut and kissing the cutting board can be heard. All around are voices, fans, and motors creating an ambient drone. The smell of roasting garlic permeates the room. Suddenly, one of the service volunteers comes in and announces that the line is running low on lentil soup. Seconds later a pan is pulled from its holding rack in the oven and is carried to the dining room. Carried along with it is the message that this is the last of the soup. After all it is almost 7 p.m.; service is about to end.

Our level of efficiency is astounding, especially because there are new faces coming and going every four hours. To compound this achievement of efficiency, the menu changes completely with every meal. The key to keeping it all together is Oso, who has worked in kitchens all over the world. In Antarctica he ran a kitchen staff of more than fifty that operated twenty-four hours a day and fed hundreds. Oso honed his ability to create a positive experience under extreme circumstances. He tells me that besides his experience, the most important reason that he is able to make the LEAF kitchen function is the continuously returning staff, paid and volunteer. The experience of the staff allows Oso to oversee operations rather than be mired down in mundane, but necessary, prep duties.

I pressed Oso to put his philosophy into words. He spent the next ten minutes expounding that every piece of food he touches is going to sustain a person's life and nourish that person's body. This, he feels, is a tremendous responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. The food that people eat is an expression of the person that created it. During his Antarctic experience, and during other world travels, Oso realized how important food is to maintaining health, happiness and overall satisfaction of life no matter who you are, or where you come from. He also realized the power of meal-time as a social event. This echoes the words of Harold McGee in his book *On Food and Cooking*, "The well-intentioned cook has two principal aims in preparing a meal: to nourish and to give pleasure" (517). This philosophy is applied in Oso's work in Eden Hall, reflected by the throngs

of people waiting in line at every festival, and voiced by the scores of compliments that follow.

In keeping with LEAF's philosophy of "creating community through music and arts," Eden Hall not only houses a kitchen, but it also houses a stage where numerous performances take place. The stage is situated in front of a huge fireplace similar to others at Camp Rockmont, thanks to their builder E W. Grove, of Grove Park Hotel fame. Along the opposite end of the hall are the buffet lines and the door to the kitchen. Between the stage and the buffet lines, are rows of seating. There is an enclosed porch attached to the lakeside of this building that is filled with tables. Walking around Eden Hall during meal times is like walking around a huge family reunion that a friend has invited us to; the sense of family fills us like the food we eat. People dance with plates and forks in hand. Mothers breast-feed while swaying to the sounds of the band on stage. The smell of roasted vegetables and fresh bread fills the room.

This atmosphere is the experience of music, food and community that LEAF promotes, but it does not manifest itself from thin-air. It is the result of the efforts of a large group of people all dedicated to the same goal. Now, after my shift is over, I recline by the lakeside to watch another brave soul soar down the zip line and splash into the water. My meal settles and I begin to think about heading out to dance the night away. Everyone should have a chance to feel this good.

FESTIVAL DATES AND INFORMATION

LEAF runs the second week of May and the third week of October every year. Information can be found at www.theleaf.com, or by calling 828.68.MUSIC (686-8742).

A LEAF RECIPE

Lentil Vegetable Soup

1 Medium Onion – finely chopped

16 Cloves Garlic – thinly sliced

2 T Olive Oil

1 cup or 3 Medium Carrots – small dice

1 cup or 1 Medium Yam – small dice

1 cup Winter Squash (preferably orange) – small dice

Small pinch Thyme

Salt and pepper to taste

1 cup French Lentils

3 cups Stock/ Water

In a large pot, or crock, cook lentils with water or stock until they are soft. Be sure not to let them boil. The idea is to softly cook one's food in order to preserve its true flavor and texture.

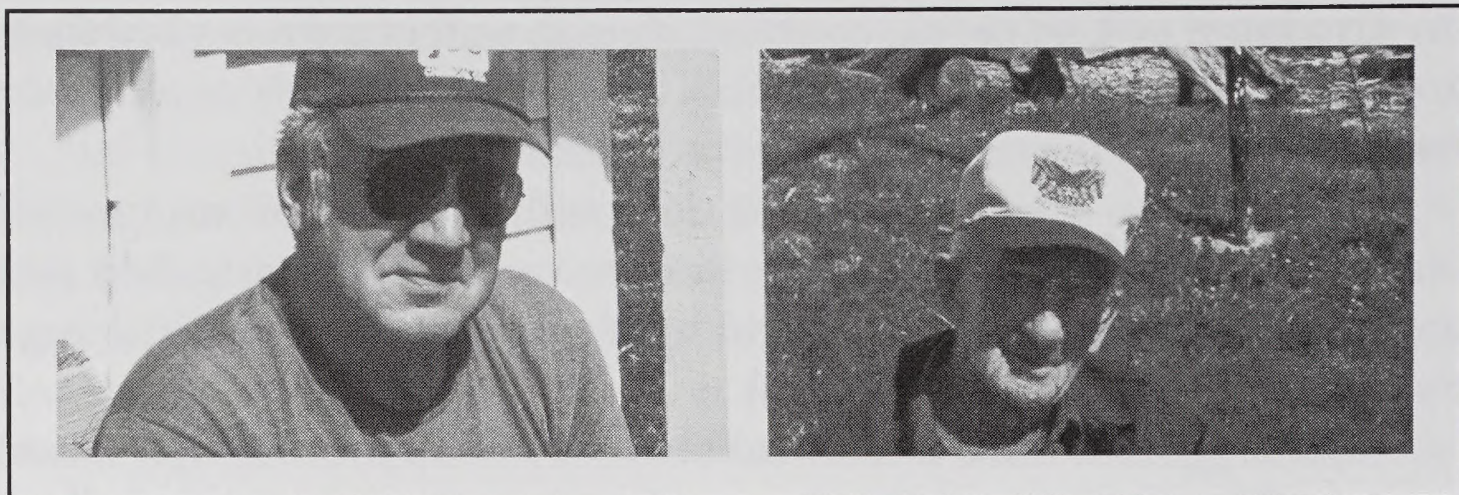
In a medium sized pot sauté onions with the olive oil over a medium-high heat until they brown. Be sure to stir frequently. Add the garlic. When their edges just begin to brown add the rest of the vegetables and cook all until just soft.

Add veggie mixture to cooked beans and add just enough water to cover. Place over a very low heat with a slightly askew lid and allow to simmer for 2-4 hours. Again, do not allow to boil and make sure to stir occasionally. A crock pot, or slow cooker is best for this soup since it maintains a much lower temperature, and the ceramic keeps heat evenly distributed.

This soup is extremely malleable and loves to be experimented with. Therefore, seasonings and vegetables vary widely. Oso says that greens go very well in this soup, along with other root vegetables, although white potatoes might be best added after roasting them. Adding soy sauce is a nice alternative to salt. Hot sauce adds a kick. A little wine or beer to supplement the water would work just fine, too. Just remember to have fun and make sure there is some good music playing while preparing all dishes.

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Fragrant Memories: They'll Get Your Attention

By Erica Abrams Locklear

I recently contributed an article about ramps to the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, and while I was able to discuss ramp traditions, uses, depletion, and the cultural significance of ramps, I was unable to include a sizeable portion of the ethnographic data I collected for the project. While writing, I faced two main dilemmas: as many readers of this journal know, when conducting ethnographic research, you often become a participant in the cultural practices that you document and write about. In doing so, the line between participant and observer often blurs, making it difficult to always write from an observational point of view. I found myself in this quandary with my ramps project. However, unlike other “typical” folklore projects, my inquiries into ramp traditions struck a personal chord: ramps were an expected springtime menu item during my childhood, and my main ramp informant—Bert Abrams—is my father. Ultimately, I decided to present the first article in a formal, scholarly way, hoping to later return to unused data. Here I showcase previously unpublished interview selections in an effort to chronicle the ramp memories and stories of two Buncombe county natives, Bert Abrams and Fred King.

Growing up in Leicester, North Carolina (approximately 20 minutes west of Asheville), I never questioned the definition, arrival, or

Frame Photo: Bert Abrams (l) and Fred King, Leicester, Buncombe County, N.C. Photo by Erica Abrams Locklear.

Erica Abrams Locklear is working on a dissertation about Appalachian literature at Louisiana State University. Her first ramps essay appears in NCFJ 53.1 (4-18).

purpose of ramps. I simply knew that each spring my father would appear at the back door with a sack of ramps and then sneak into the house. The arrival of ramps in our formerly odor-free kitchen lasted for a few short moments, only until my mother banished the “smelly old things” to the basement refrigerator, which she hoped would contain their stench. Eventually I learned that “old-timers” laud ramps as a superior cleansing agent, often insisting on consuming large amounts of ramps each spring to clear their sinuses, digestive systems, and more than likely, their entire household. It wasn’t until I moved four hours away to attend college in the piedmont section of North Carolina that I discovered ramps were not, as I had previously assumed, common to everyone. Living in Louisiana now, ramps seem as exotic to Baton Rouge as voodoo does to Appalachia.

Although ramps constitute an important aspect of Appalachian material culture, the stories and lore that surround them also contribute to the rich oral history of the region. The unique nature of the ramp prompts elaborate stories and the re-telling of rich memories. During interview sessions, my father and Fred shared three types of ramp-centered remembrances: food-centered memories; stories in which ramps were part of a communal activity; and tales woven around the hilarious over-the-top nature of ramp consumption.

When beginning this project I assumed that since ramps are a food item, many memories surrounding them would be about ramp recipes. While my questions did garner such results, I also learned about ramp preparation during specific incidents. For example, my father still remembers details about the supper he ate during his first ramp patch expedition with Riley Hicks, a tenant farmer living on my father’s farm. As with many other portions of our interviews, my father was careful to explain the process like a set of instructions, so I could enjoy the same experiences he had over fifty years ago: “He [Riley] would start the potatoes, and get those about three-quarters done, then add the cut-up ramps to it. Or, either, we would go through and do the same thing and start the eggs scrambling, or start the ramps sautéing, then add eggs to them and scramble them.” He went on to explain that after traveling a long and difficult distance to find and dig ramps, it was customary that the men rewarded themselves with a ramp supper.

When I asked my father whether he preferred ramps raw or cooked, he replied:

They’re so good when you first get them, you can’t hardly quit eating them. [. . .] That’s when I like to eat ramps the best, is to go dig them

[...] and to come down to a branch, and clean you a bunch, and have a bologna sandwich and mayonnaise. I'd just as soon eat that as anything.

In addition to enjoying the taste of ramps, it seems that the act of digging them and then enjoying them in nature adds to the experience.

Similarly, Fred King shares memories that emphasize how much he enjoyed (and still enjoys) eating ramps. Born in 1912 in the upper reaches of Boyd Cove, just under the Chestnut Gap on Big Sandy Mush (a rural community approximately twenty miles west of Asheville), Mr. King remembers eating ramps as early as 1917 or 1918, and when asked what he thought about them then, he responded: "I thought they was delicious." While Fred remembers traveling with his brothers a short distance to Madison County each spring to dig ramps, during our interview he placed much more emphasis on a ramp festival held in 1949 or 1950 at Black Camp Gap, in Haywood County. He remembers: "you could go back there and you could get you a plate-dinner for a dollar. A dollar. [...] You got cooked ramps, you got scrambled eggs, you got bread, anything you wanted to eat." When asked if the festival was a big deal, Mr. King responded: "You better believe it was [...] the best part about it was getting enough to eat." For Mr. King and his family in the 1940s and 50s, in addition to operating as a food source, ramps were a reason to travel to a festival that provided an abundant (but reasonably priced) meal. While ramps were the reason for the festival, according to Mr. King, the joy of the festival came from enjoying a wide variety of foods including, but not limited to, ramps.

Interestingly, my father remembers attending that same festival, but instead of focusing on the available festival food items, his memories stress the adolescent excitement he felt in attending a social event. He recalls traveling to the festival in Charlie King's truck (Fred's brother), along with twelve or thirteen other people. In fact, he reports being more excited about traveling to another place than anything else:

Well, at that time, I was just a kid, you know it didn't leave a lot of impression on me, but it was somewhere to go and see something that hadn't been there before, and the food was pretty good. Because those ramps, you could get those things either scrambled with eggs, fried with potatoes, [or] sautéed.

Although Mr. King attributed the festival's special nature to the abundance and quality of food available, for my father, the excursion itself was every bit as enjoyable as the actual festival.

A natural raconteur, my father most enjoys sharing stories about ramps that produce a laugh, like the one in which he remembers vivid details associated with the return-trip of his first ramp patch journey:

We didn't take any light with us, so about dark, we had the fire going, and the clouds started coming in. It wasn't long before it started snowing. Now here we were, back there with two horses, and three of us, and my dog, with no lights, and no sleeping bags, and no tents. We had planned to sleep on the ground, if you can believe that. So we decided to start off the mountain [. . .] we started off by leading the horses single file, and I remember I was in the back, following old Bess [his horse]. And Bess's tail was on a forty-five degree angle, horizontal to the ground, with the wind a blowing so hard, and I looked down at my dog, Ring, and he was sideways.

Of course my father had a safe (if cold) return home, and all was well, but his first experience with ramps provided him with an important memory that he can share today in a humorous, tall-tale-like story.

A social man at heart, my father enjoys sharing what he has with friends almost as much as he enjoys telling stories. For years he went to Wyoming each fall to hunt elk, and he became friends with a hunter from the area, Frank Laker. Of course my father told Frank about ramps and offered to mail him several bunches once they were in season. He goes on to remember:

Then when I got out there that fall, elk hunting, I said, "Frank, how did you like your ramps?" He said, "God, I loved them things, but it's kindly strange," he said, "my favorite dog wouldn't have nothing to do with me the next morning [. . .] I went out and blew my breath in his face, and he put his tail between his legs and run."

Even though I have heard this story several times throughout my life, picturing the dog's reaction still makes me grin, especially since I often had a similar response to my father's breath after he enjoyed ramps.

Similar to the hilarious nature of his story about Frank, one of my father's funniest stories involves his friend, Morris Prestwood, as well as a few of Morris's other friends. In the early 1950s the men

went to the Bear Waller patch to dig ramps, and during our interview my father shares the story:

So they go get the ramps, and come in, and those boys started nipping a little bit, drinking a beer, or whatever, so they built a fire, and started to cook supper. And somebody put bacon in the frying pan, and Morris was doing the cooking. So after he got the bacon cooked and took it out, somebody said, "Fry me a egg." Well, Morris or somebody broke an egg, and put it in that pan, and Green King, or whoever it was, said, "Morris, you don't have an egg turner." And he says, "Hell, I don't need one." So he picks the pan up, and this kindly reminds me in 2005 of Emeril, how he flips things on the cooking channel in a frying pan. Morris flips that frying pan up, that egg comes flying out, and caps over his right eye. And here this grease is 360 degrees, off that egg; you can imagine what that guy's eye looked like. And he stays back there, two or three days, afraid to come home, on account of his wife, and he's often told me this several times. He said, "I looked like Spot, on *The Little Rascals*."

Once again, although my father's story relates to ramps (in fact it could not have occurred without them, since the men were digging ramps), its importance lies in the telling of the story and the hilarious effect it has on listeners.

During our main interview session, my father and Fred shared many ramp memories together, and while my father reminisced about digging ramps in 1964 in Maggie Valley with Fred, he related another funny, yet personal, story:

I'd got out of the service, and I had a two-door, hardtop Chevrolet stick-shift car, with a 327 engine; it had a red interior. So I picked Fred up, and we went to the ramp patch and brought home ramps in the back of the car. Well, that night I had a date with your mother, so when we were done digging ramps I washed the car, but I couldn't get rid of the smell. When your mother got in she said, "What is that smell? Oh my Lord, you went to the ramp patch, and I'm going to have to smell those things all night." Well, apparently the smell didn't scare her away. We got married the next spring and have been together ever since.

This story clearly illustrates that not only do ramps provide fond memories for my father, but they also allow him to trace events in his life related to ramps, which lends them an altogether more important meaning.

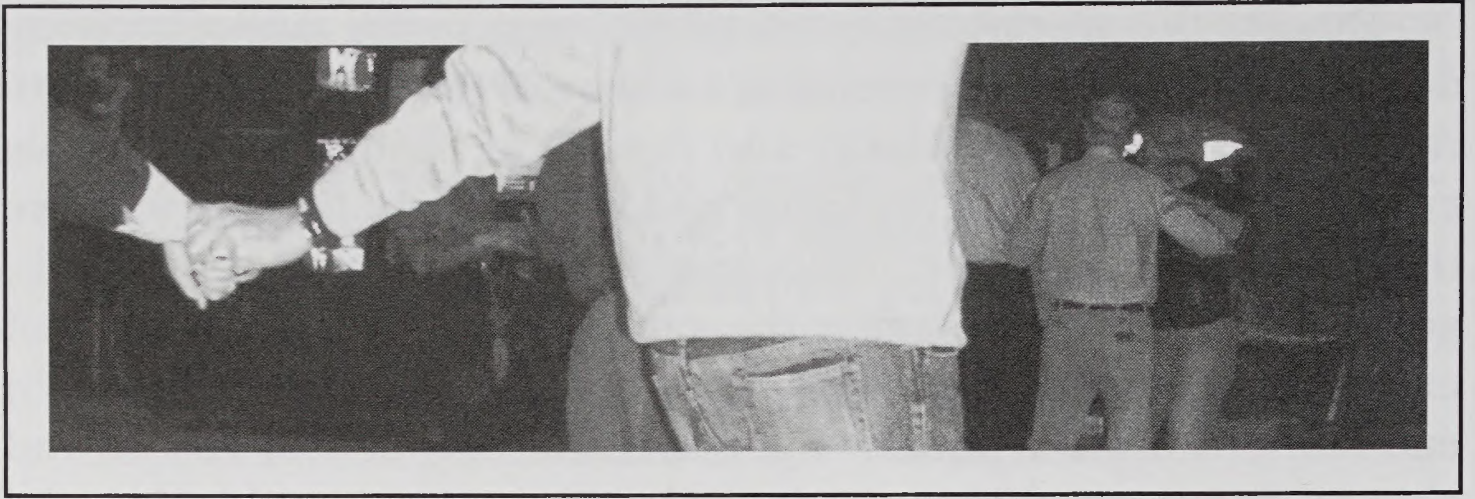
Despite the precarious future of the ramp in the face of growing demand, it continues to operate as a source of fond (if smelly) memories and an outlet for hilarity and fun. Even though many people enjoy festivals each year, my father and Fred King both seem to agree that the best way to enjoy ramps involves knowing where a patch is, going there yourself, digging the ramps (but not too many), and eating them as soon as possible. Mr. King insists that the best way to eat ramps involves “a pound of grease, about fifty or sixty ramps, and about a dozen eggs.” My father’s version varies a bit, but it’s close: he prefers ramp gravy poured over eggs (scrambled with ramps) and a few homemade biscuits on the side. In addition to the joy of eating freshly dug ramps, both men also appreciate a good smelly laugh.

Moreover, while my father tells stories about past ramp events, he continues to make new ramp memories. During a recent visit home he proudly told me about the ramps he and other ramp-lovers had dug, as well as his plans to distribute them to friends throughout the community. When I asked how he had preserved the ramps, he listed the usual methods (canning or freezing), but then he grinned and leaned in closer to whisper: “Now don’t tell your mother, but I fixed up a few special; I canned them in liquor instead of water.” Impressed by this new technique, I asked whether the ramps maintained their characteristic flavor and texture. My father shrugged and said, “Hell, I don’t know. But if they’re no good, we’ll just throw out the ramps and drink the liquor.”

For me, the stories my father shared about ramps occupy a meaningful space in my conception of home, as well as my relationship with my father. Each spring he takes plastic bags full of ramps to Pizza Hut with the proud request for a ramp pizza. After eating the concoction he always declares: “Now that’ll get your attention.” Indeed, everything about ramps, from their smell to their shared memories, has gotten my attention.

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The History and Evolution of the Shag: A Carolina Tradition

By Carroll A. Brown

The history of the shag, a dance that originated in the Carolinas, begins over 60 years ago. Robert Crease, author of “The Return of the Shag,” describes the shag as “a staple of Carolina life,” and notes the shag began as a “slow, easy dance that developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s to early rhythm-and-blues music” (86). In a personal interview with Bo Bryan, shag historian and author of the book *Shag: The Legendary Dance of the South*, he explains:

The shag dance has endured, against all the odds, because it was a dance that was taken up by rebels and outsiders and nerds who couldn’t get a date any other way—’cause if you could dance, you could get a cool girl to go out with you. For some reasons, and I still can’t quite define it, people who learn how to shag dance feel a sense of togetherness in something that almost died out. It’s kind of a cause to preserve the dance. It verges on a kind of mild obsession or even religion in some instances. It’s a cult; it’s turning into a sort of cult. And the dance is continually changing. (B. Bryan)

I experienced the Ocean Drive shag scene as a teenager in the 1960s. After graduation, I moved on to other dances and forgot about the shag. Then, in 1994, I attended a conference in North Myrtle Beach, formerly Ocean Drive, while the Society of Stranders (S.O.S.)

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Frame Photo: Dancers at the Mountain Shag Club, Asheville, NC. Photo courtesy of Bill Anderson.

shag festival was in full swing. The town was filled with thousands of middle-aged shaggers partying and dancing at the local beach clubs. I was amazed. Why was the dance still going strong after all these years and what was the attraction? This marked the beginning of my interest in researching the shag as a cultural phenomenon and became the topic of my dissertation.

In order to become familiar with the shaggers and the festival activities, I attended the S.O.S. festivals in North Myrtle Beach for four years. I visited shag clubs in North and South Carolina and joined a local club. My goal was to interview shaggers who had first-hand knowledge about the history of the dance. Many of the people interviewed are long-time shaggers, some were part of the original group of teenage dancers in the 1940s. Professional shaggers, social shaggers, beach club proprietors, and shag historians were also interviewed. In the course of my research, I began to conceptualize the shag in terms of a series of processes: invasion, innovation, cultural contact, diffusion, and environmental changes (Hess, Markson and Stein 611-612). I used these reoccurring sources of social change as a framework to investigate the history and evolution of shag dancing (Brown 66-78).

INVASION AND INNOVATION

In the mid-1940s, many white teenagers from the Carolinas spent their summer vacations in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, which is located on a stretch of coast called the Grand Strand. It was here in the years following the war, writes author Frank Beacham, in his book *Whitewash: A Southern Journey Through Music, Mayhem and Murder*, that “white beach dancers forged their own counterculture along the Carolina coast” (38). Some of the young men stayed for the summer working as lifeguards, dishwashers, or bingo callers. A few supported themselves by diving off the pier for change thrown by tourists. Others proudly called themselves dance bums and hustled female tourists. In the book, *Whitewash*, one dance bum recalls, “I’d get names, and hell in the wintertime I’d travel around to these different towns [to visit the girls at home]. I’d get a little money off the girls. I didn’t work much. The girls liked to dance with the beach crowd. I’d put the poor mouth on. Tell them I was a little bit down...I just didn’t work. I was sorry as hell” (57). As this story shows, many shaggers were eager to be a part of the scene at the Grand Strand, even if it meant living in an unconventional way.

The residents in the community, however, regarded the teenagers as an invasion of worthless beach bums and treated them accord-



Spider Kirkman and partner. Photo courtesy of Bo Bryan and Shag Hall of Fame.

ingly. In retaliation, Crease explains, the teenagers developed a distinct mode of dress and an aloof, “cool” demeanor. “Cool meant, first, a look.” The boys sported “long, slicked-back, peroxided hair with a ducktail, a V-necked sweater with no shirt underneath, and custom-tailored baggy pants” while the girls wore “short shorts, cut to reveal a sliver of panty. Cool footwear consisted of simply Weejuns or moccasins. Socks were uncool” (86).

This “retaliation” to the invading “beach bums” formed a subcultural pattern. Such patterns emerge when people seek to collectively adjust to a set of common circumstances (Maines 269). Cool wasn’t only dressing a certain way, it also meant following a certain pattern of activity. The teenagers spent their days idling on the beach and their nights dancing at the open-air pavilions that served as social centers for communities along the Grand Strand. The pavilions were equipped with a non-alcoholic refreshment stand, a dance floor, and



Franz Johnson and partner. Photo courtesy of the Shag Hall of Fame.

a jukebox filled with swing music (Crease 86). During a personal interview, Harry Hitopolous, 78 years old and a dancer since the early 1940s, recalls that “back then it was the era of Big Bands. You didn’t have disc jockeys, you had records, you know, Wurlitzers and things like that. You went and put your nickel in there or whatever it cost

back then.” Harry explains that “a lot of people would let the machines play anyway just to get the crowd in there.” Each night the dance crowd would congregate near the jukebox when the best dancers, or “big guns,” hit the dance floor. Average dancers backed off the floor as these big guns staked off what amounted to home turf (Holliday 3). Beacham describes the phenomenon at the Myrtle Beach Pavilion in the following explanation:

White night life was centered around the jitterbug, a strenuous, acrobatic dance usually performed to quick-tempo swing or jazz. It supported a subculture of fashionable and young creative dancers known as jitterbugs...The star jitterbugs—known to the crowd by such names as Rubber Legs, Chicken, Bunk, the Roach, and Little Robin—appeared one by one to show off their latest moves. (27-28)

A big draw for tourists at the Myrtle Beach Pavilion was watching the dancers showcase their innovative steps each night.

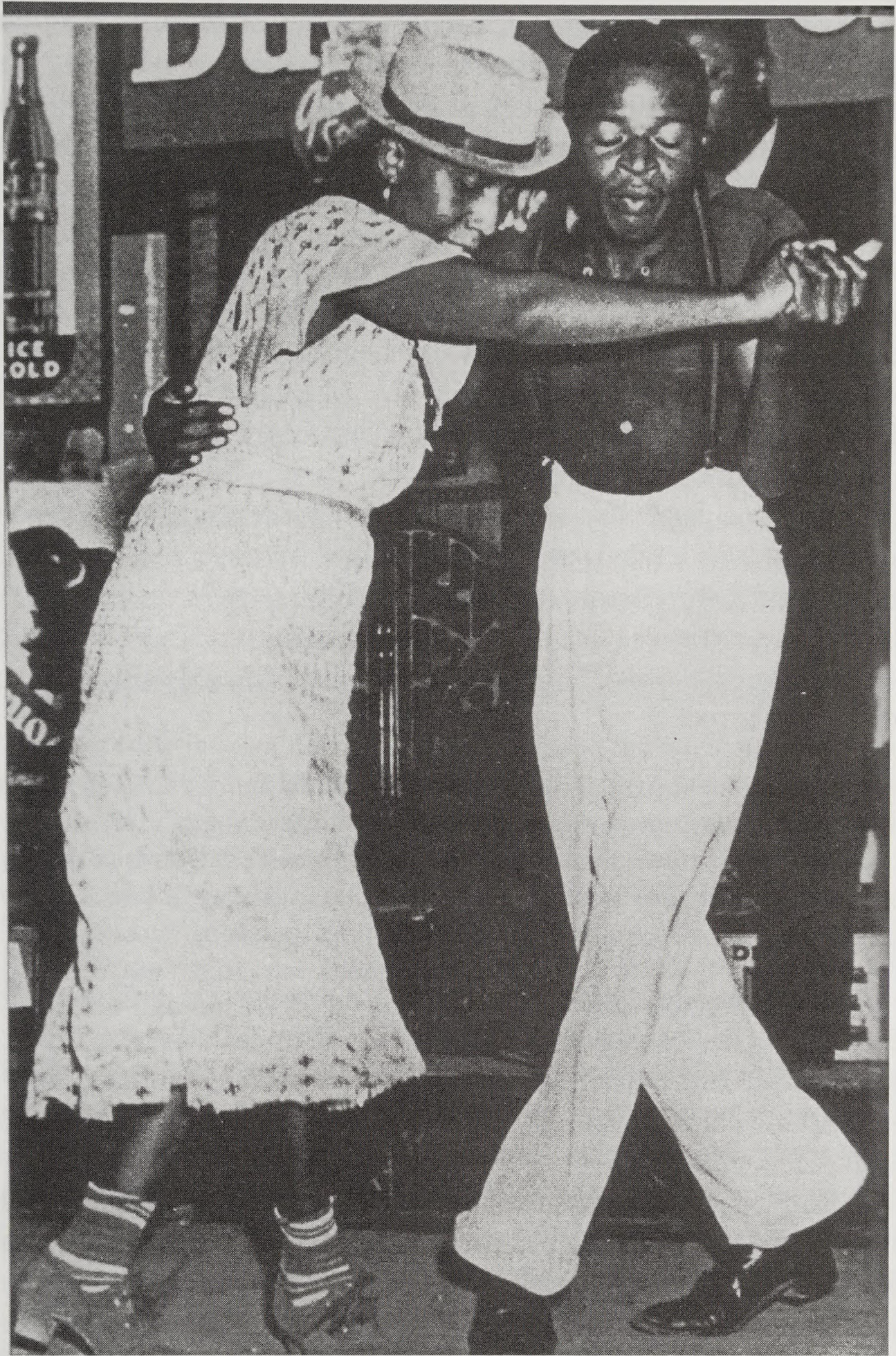
CULTURAL CONTACT, DIFFUSION AND INNOVATION

In contrast, Atlantic Beach, known as the Black Pearl of South Carolina, was a segregated black community located in the middle of the Strand. “It’s a beautiful place and it’s owned by the black community,” explains Harold Bessent, owner of Fat Harold’s beach club in North Myrtle Beach, in a personal interview, “a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful beach, but it’s also some of the most prime property. That’s why we call it the Black Pearl.”

Not only was the location different, the cultural environment was also different. At Atlantic Beach, the jukeboxes were filled with “race music,” music made by black musicians and marketed to a black audience (Palmer 8). In 1949, *Billboard Magazine* reclassified race music on its charts as rhythm and blues (R&B). While the white teenagers at the Myrtle Beach Pavilion were jitterbugging to Big Band Swing music, the blacks at Atlantic Beach were dancing to race music (Crease 86; Bryan 26).

Cultural contact occurred when the white dancers, “ignoring the state’s social rule that the races shouldn’t mix” (Beacham 57), habitually visited the black clubs at Atlantic Beach to hear the music and participate in the dancing. Harry Driver, a top shag dancer from Dunn, North Carolina, was also the 1952 North Carolina State Jitterbug Champion. Before his death in 1998, Harry noted:

Black music was essentially banned in the segregated Carolinas...They called it “suggestive music”... A white Southern society was not going



Dancers at the Big Apple nightclub in Columbia, SC. Photo courtesy of Gus Graydon and Phil Sawyer.

to listen to that. The music was parental-repulsive. Lyrics like “Sock it to me, baby, one more time” or “I’m gonna smoke you all night long” made parents go crazy and left the teenagers wanting to hear more. Plus it had the tempo we liked to dance to. (Beacham 55)

According to shag band musician, Bobby Simmons, in a personal interview, "black musicians have a certain feel for playing on the back beat and doing things that just really make you feel the groove." Through cultural contact with the black dancers at Atlantic Beach, the white dancers learned to feel the music and express that feeling through the dance.

Cultural diffusion and innovation occurred through two sources, the dance and the music. Innovative shaggers picked up the "dirty shag" dance steps from the black dancers and incorporated the new steps into the jitterbug danced at the white pavilions. Henry "Pork Chop" Hemingway, who became the first black policemen in Myrtle Beach, describes the dirty shag as "basically a bump and grind type of thing" (Beacham 33). Holliday notes that the shaggers "toned down the dirty shag's undulations into a more subtle pelvic motion" (2). Nevertheless, the dance was considered too suggestive for the region and the social times. Cooter Douglas, a seasoned shagger and beach club manager from Charlotte, North Carolina, during a personal interview, noted:

A lot of these people that I talk about, I think they helped create a lot of what was the shag starting out, the "dirty shag." The police down here would arrest them sometimes when they were doing it, especially when they started the belly roll. Oh God, if a Baptist saw, that's all it took. You know what I mean? (C. Douglas)

Harold Bessent, who managed The Pad beach club for 10 years, remembers the changing social times, "They called it the 'dirty shag' back then. I remember we had to build a fence around The Pad so the public couldn't see in. But it was the same shag you are seeing today."

Another source of innovation and cultural diffusion was the musical crossover on the jukeboxes. A few of the white male dancers, who frequented the Atlantic Beach nightclubs, suggested to the jukebox operators that some of the race music be shifted from the jukeboxes at Atlantic Beach to the jukeboxes at the white pavilions (Beacham 27; Bryan 3; Crease 86). The records were instant hits. "Four years before the Cleveland disc jockey, Alan Freed, inaugurated the great 'crossover,' by programming black music on white stations, innovative Strand beach bums had already incorporated race music into their lives" (Crease 87). In the shag world, cultural contact between the two races resulted in diffusion of race music and its associated innovative dance steps.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND INVASION

In 1945, as a war restriction, the government imposed the banning of bright lights on the coast. This manmade environmental change caused the dancers to move 90 miles inland to White Lake, North Carolina, a resort area situated near a couple of military bases. The shaggers invaded the Crystal Club at White Lake, a local swing music club that was a popular hangout for soldiers on leave. There the dancers came in contact with a steady influx of soldiers from across the United States. Constant competition over female attention on the dance floor resulted in conflicts between the dancers and the soldiers. Consequently, the dancers, who would rather dance than fight, relocated to Carolina Beach, North Carolina where the jukeboxes were stocked with race music (Bryan 45).

Carolina Beach was also a favorite place for soldiers on leave from the military. Once again, dancers and soldiers engaged in habitual fighting over female attention. In a personal interview, Norfleet Jones, an early jitterbugger from Charlotte, North Carolina, explains:

You can't say it wasn't a competitive dance because it was. But your claim to fame, your glory, was whoever got the fair-haired girl. And that was the best dancer on the floor. So you competed every time you walked on that floor. It wasn't an organized competition. You didn't have judges. Your peers were your judges. The crowd was your judges. The ultimate goal was: Can you clear the dance floor? Can you get good enough? Can you walk out there and shut the floor down? Will the other dancers in the crowd want to see you? (N. Jones)

The outcome of the continual conflict between the dancers and the soldiers was a city ordinance that placed a minimum square footage on dance floors within the city limits. Even though there were restrictions placed on the dance floors, "the crucial factor was that kids had to be 18 years old to get into the large Ocean Plaza Ballroom, where liquor was served" (Bryan 51). Subsequently, the dancers migrated to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and the Myrtle Beach Pavilion became their headquarters.

A fusion of the dance styles occurred in Myrtle Beach and the dance that evolved became known as the shag. Harry Hitopoulos, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, in a personal interview, remembers:

When we first started, it was really the jitterbug. It wasn't the shag. And contrary to what a lot of people believe, the shag was not a dance. It was a step that you did. It had two or three variations of that step. It

was called shagging. Then shagging sorta disappeared. Then it came back and it was known as the shag. But it actually started out as the jitterbug. It was a fast, a faster, dance than the shag. The shag is more of a laid back version. It's not a version of the jitterbug, but that's where it started. (H. Hitopoulos)

The credit for the shag is not attributed to a single person. Phil Sawyer, S.O.S. President Emeritus and a dancer for over 60 years, explains, "The shag did not, was not invented in any one spot or any one time, in any one beach or place or in any one season. It evolved over a period of years." Norfleet Jones agrees: "Where did it start? Nobody knows. That's an unanswerable question."

MORE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The shaggers remained in Myrtle Beach until 1954 when a natural environmental change occurred. Hurricane Hazel destroyed the beach pavilions and the "Strand beach-bum culture was nearly annihilated" (Crease 87). Not only were the pavilions destroyed, the entire social structure of the community was transformed. Following the hurricane's destruction of the Grand Strand, several manmade environmental changes took place. Myrtle Beach began to experience economic growth and a surge of real estate development. A few pavilions re-opened but the majority of the old beach pavilions were replaced with new restaurants and hotels (Crease 87). In addition to the environmental changes, the shaggers felt the pressure of competition from rock and roll and television. But, as Bryan notes, "Instead of moving on and adapting the shag to the next generation of sound, the crowd stayed musically put, holding fast to the rhythm that they had begun discovering in 1943. They accepted new releases, but only those that approximated early beach music" (75). The shag evolved from the "new" innovative dance to one determined to preserve its past.

DARK AGES OF THE SHAG

The time period between 1954 and the late 1960s is known as the "Dark Ages of the Shag" (Bryan 75; Crease 88). In a personal interview with Johnny Hammond, an early shagger from Anderson, South Carolina, he recalls the changing social times:

The last time I went to the beach was in 1954, the year of the hurricane. I was still in high school. I went into the Navy in 1959 and I noticed that everything was different when I got out; people got married and moved away, off at school, got jobs. With the British inva-



A temple of memory for generations of shaggers, Ocean Drive, SC.
Photo courtesy of Bo Bryan and Ransome Anderson.

sion, I noticed a change and then you had the “Hell No, We Won’t Go” generation and all your hippies that would rather look tacky and just not do anything. There were places to shag but, by then, we mostly had house parties because everyone had grown up by then and had jobs and families. So you’d get together at somebody’s house every weekend and shag and cookout. But they still had music at the beach, at The Pad. (J. Hammond)

The dancers had grown older and the shag was no longer a primary focal point in their lives. Although the total number of dancers diminished, the shag was kept alive by a small group of die-hard shaggers who continued to do the dance.

THE SECOND INVASION OF MYRTLE BEACH

In the middle to late 1950s, a rough juvenile delinquent gang invaded Myrtle Beach. The gang originated in the mill districts of Charlotte, North Carolina, and the members carried switchblades. Conflict developed between the dancers and the gang members. Consequently, a city ordinance was passed that allowed the local police “to stop anyone on the street and demand that they produce a

20 dollar bill as evidence they were not vagrants" (Bryan 79). The ordinance drove both groups out of town.

The dancers relocated 15 miles north to Ocean Drive, South Carolina, where a beer joint called The Pad became a home for the shaggers. Harold Bessent, former manager of The Pad, remembers:

The Pad was built right after Hurricane Hazel when it destroyed the pavilion. A man named Mr. Blankenship took the bottom of about the only building left on the beach that wasn't destroyed and turned the bottom into a pass-through, put a jukebox and a dance floor in it, and it became world famous overnight. (H. Bessent)

Following the invasion of the shaggers, Ocean Drive came to be considered the "Mecca and Jerusalem of rhythm and blues" (Bryan 7) and, for 39 years, shagging at The Pad became a shag world tradition.

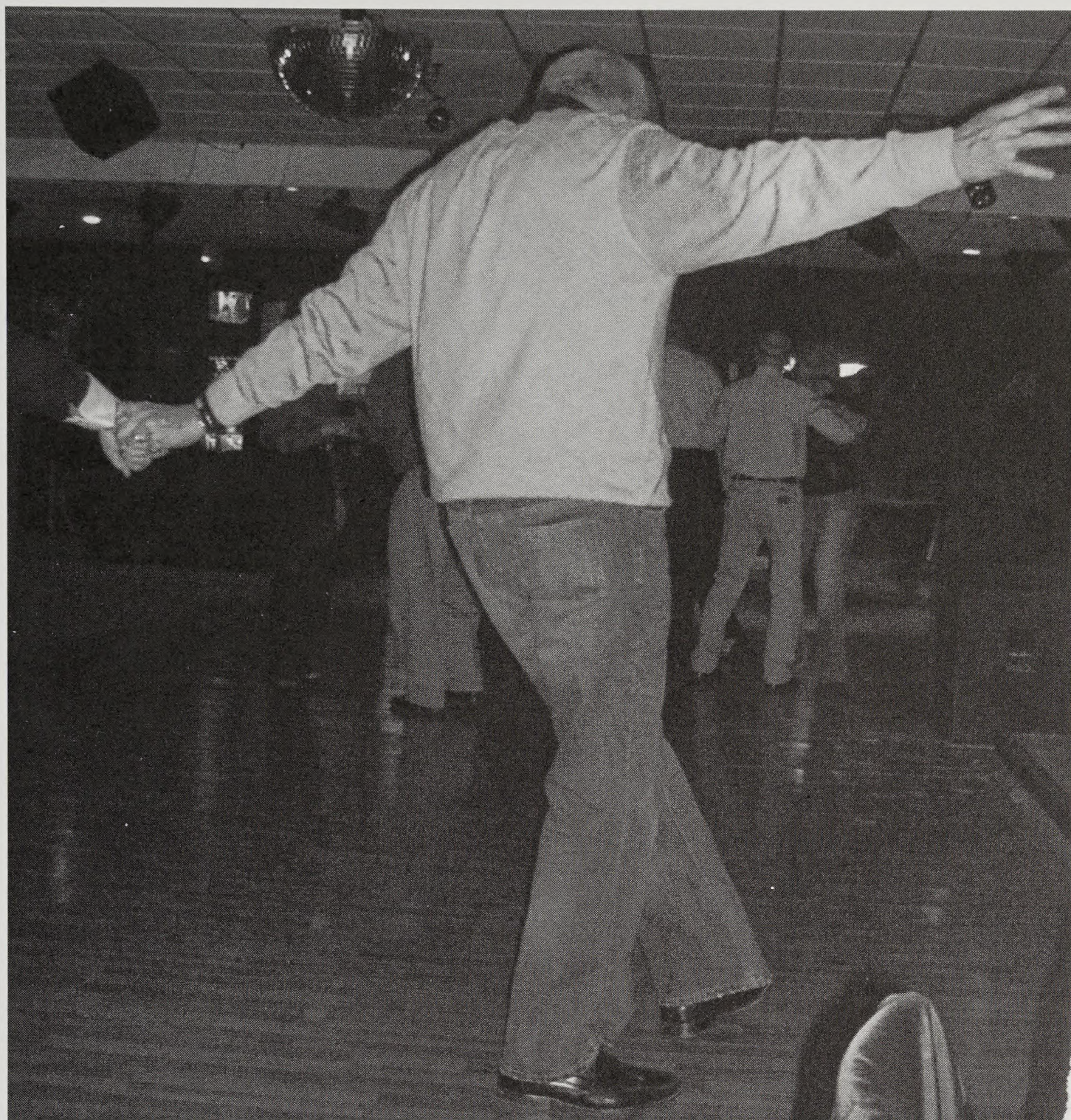
SHAG RENAISSANCE

Following the Dark Ages of the Shag, the dance regained popularity in 1970. Crease notes that the period of time that began in 1970 was known as the "Shag Renaissance" (88). The return of touch dancing, and the popularity of disco music, which had a tempo and beat similar to shag music, contributed to the renewed interest in the shag. When the shag returned, its "main exposure" was in the form of contests" (Holliday 2). Charlie Womble, a professional shagger originally from New Hill, North Carolina, in a personal interview, remembers when he began to dance:

I started disco. I didn't dance until probably 1978 and for a couple of years I did disco. And, uh, then I saw people doing the shag. I really wasn't that crazy about it and then I came down to one of the contests they had Labor Day and I told some of the people I was going to dance in it next year just as a challenge. So I did it for a year and I got hooked and never quit. (C. Womble)

Although the basic shag step appears to be a simple eight-count, it is deceptively complex step to master, as is the necessary smoothness of the style.

The primary factor responsible for the Shag Renaissance was the leadership and grass-roots organizing of one of the original shaggers, Shad Alberty. A top-notch dancer from Greensboro, North Carolina, Alberty was "an old-guard remnant who still improvised, still created individualistic steps and talked about 'pressing for the limit,' 'danc-



Shad Alberty protege Charlie Strigo of the Mountain Shag Club performing a sweep. Photo courtesy of Bill Anderson.

ing on the edge” (Holliday 2). One of Alberty’s former dance students, Sam West, in a personal interview, recalls Shad’s innovative style: “Shad was a very smooth, calculated kind of dancer. He could feel a song and do things with it that nobody else could do.” Sam explains that Shad had the “most atomic timing in the world. He could go off into something and we’d say ‘he’ll never get out of this’ and he would always come right back in and on time.”

Alberty began to promote shag contests in the early 1970s and eventually offered professional shag lessons in 1978. Both proved to be highly successful. Within a year of Alberty’s initial contest, a network of dancers and a professional circuit of shag contests developed. At this time, however, media access was limited.



Janice Bowers and Bill Anderson, Mountain Shag Club members, Asheville, NC. Photo courtesy of Bill Anderson.

“Communication was informal. No organizations and no shag clubs existed” (Bryan 89). A few beach music clubs began to reopen at Ocean Drive and the Shag Renaissance extended to other areas in North and South Carolina.

Today, North Myrtle Beach is once again invaded, this time by middle-aged shaggers attending the now thrice-yearly Society of Stranders dance festivals which began in 1980. Each 10-day festival, described as the “largest adult beach party” on the East Coast, attracts 10,000 to 12,000 attendees. Bo Bryan, in a personal interview, believes that the shag has “stayed alive through all these years due in

no small part to that influx of individuals bringing in money during off season" at S.O.S. festivals where they "spend 8 million dollars and do that again in the spring and especially in the dead of the winter-time."

CONCLUSION

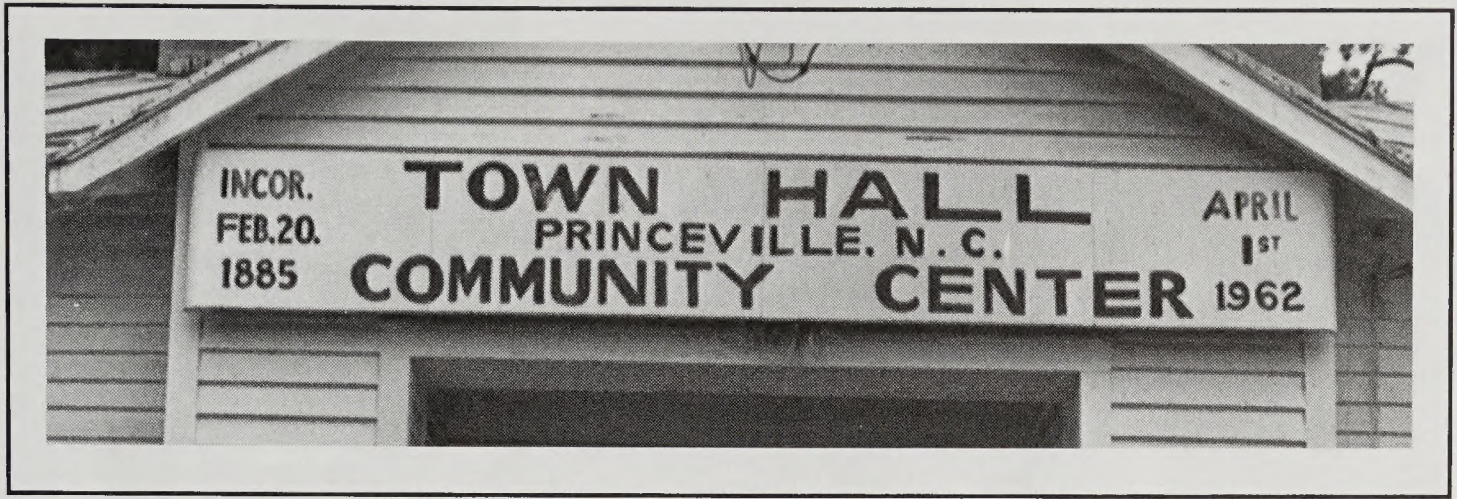
The shag has become a permanent part of southern culture. In the early days of the shag, only a small number of "renegades had the nerve and the desire to learn the intricate steps" of the dance. Nowadays the dance is taught as "an element of Southern history" in grammar schools, middle schools, and colleges (Bryan 5). There are a number of shag-related books and periodicals, associations and organizations, radio stations, and websites. Today, there are over 100 shag clubs located primarily in the Carolinas which, according to Bryan, provide a strong social network for club members:

Most of the guys are middle to late middle age, been divorced at least once, some of them 4 or 5 times, and the women are the same way. Most of the gals have been divorced one or more times. But in that crowd, there is a kind of "free trade zone of the romantic impulse" or something. You can be a five-time loser and still find somebody to hold hands with you and take one more trip around the rose bush, you know. Uh, it's, uh, it's a very effective eye to eye "lonely hearts club." It's never couched in those terms. People never say, "I'm coming in here because I'm lonesome and I want somebody to dance with or somebody to gaze at and so forth." But that's what's happening left and right. And if you hang out in those places and suddenly get diagnosed with cancer, you got people swarming all over you trying to pray for you and take care of you and bring you casseroles. (B. Bryan)

Some of the S.O.S. festival originators and festival attendees are ex-beach bums of the 1940s who now possess political power and economic resources. For example, South Carolina State Representative "Bubber" Snow, an early "fast dancer," introduced a bill to make the shag the state dance. As a result, the shag was declared the official state dance of South Carolina in 1984. Similarly, North Carolina Senator Walter Dalton, also an early shagger, introduced a bill to make the shag the official dance in North Carolina. In 2005, the shag was declared the official popular dance of North Carolina. It seems that the shag is finally here to stay.

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“The People What Makes the Town”: The Semiotics of Home and Town Spaces in Princeville, North Carolina

By Tyler Kendall

PRINCEVILLE, THE OLDEST BLACK TOWN IN AMERICA

In September of 1999, Princeville, North Carolina, was destroyed by the flooding Tar River as a result of Hurricane Floyd. It wasn't the first time that the oldest town incorporated by African Americans in the United States was destroyed by floods, but it was perhaps the most significant of those many times. As a result of the 1999 flood, national attention turned to this small, rural community. From media coverage such as National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* in 2004, to recognition by President Clinton, to being featured in a documentary (Rowe and Grimes) and a book (Halpern), Princeville was acknowledged as a place of great cultural and historical significance. In the months following the flood, despite encouragement that Princeville accept a government buy-out from FEMA, the residents of Princeville chose to remain in Princeville and to accept the hardships of rebuilding their increasingly recognized, historical homeplace (Rowe). In the words of one resident, they “wanted Princeville to continue to be Princeville” (“Braving Home”).

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Frame Photo: The sign to Princeville's old town hall proudly lists the date of the town's incorporation.



Princeville's old town hall mostly submerged in the floodwaters of Hurricane Floyd, 1999. Photo Credit: The Town of Princeville, NC.

Princeville was founded in 1865 by freed slaves who settled on an unwanted flood plain along the Tar River, opposite the city of Tarboro, the county seat of Edgecombe County and a major city in post-Civil War North Carolina. Twenty years later, Princeville became the first municipality incorporated by African Americans in the United States. This incorporation was supported at first by the former slave owners and other white residents of the area, who valued the burgeoning African American community as a source of cheap labor. In the years following the town's incorporation, however, growing racist sentiment increasingly characterized Princeville as a source of white fear and suspicion, and white sentiment turned against the small but growing community (Mobley). Tarboro officials even attempted, unsuccessfully, to dissolve Princeville's charter. Despite all this, Princeville survived. Today, of its approximately 2,000 residents, over 98% are African American (Rowe).

Princeville's unique and troubled history positions the town as a site of rich cultural significance. The town and its population also present opportunities for a wide variety of social scientific inquiries. One line of questioning that is particularly inviting, but generally under-examined, lies in a rubric best described as "the semiotics of space." What do spaces and places mean to people? How do the residents of a place conceive of (and perceive) the spaces around them?



Princeville's old town hall before the flood. Photo Credit: Charlie Killebrew, Braswell Memorial Library, Killebrew Collection, Rocky Mount, NC.

Princeville in its post-Hurricane Floyd era is a fascinating place to ask these sorts of questions.

As Marcel Danesi notes, "the gist of the semiotic story is that cities, shelters, buildings, [and] communal sites invariably constitute codes" (142). The mud at the base of a tree, the fresh paint of a new home, the old town hall fenced off and awaiting renovation, these features of the town have meaning for its inhabitants. They are, in the parlance of semiotics, "codes." This paper attempts to unravel some of these meanings of place and space by examining discussions of Princeville by town residents and then considering these discussions in terms of some theoretical writings on the semiotics of space and place.

THE "EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE" AND "NARRATIVE-DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH" TO SPATIAL INQUIRY

If, following Danesi, "communal sites invariably constitute codes" (142), how does one study and interpret those codes? Research on space and place, both theoretical and empirical, cuts across a number of disciplines.¹ A primary thread that runs through the major theoretical work on spatial semiotics, however, is a lack of interest in the individual, both in regard to the role of the individual in the production of space and in the role of the individual in the perception of spatial signification. Yet, for the work here, and for spatial semiotics in general, understanding the relationships between the individual and spatial meaning is essential.

Yi-Fu Tuan, a prominent human geographer, has made some important inroads into the intersection of space and semiotics, especially as they impact the individual. In particular, Tuan's (1977) work on the "experiential perspective" in human geography is immensely helpful. He explores how humans gain their sense(s) of place and space starting in infancy and how these senses, or, rather, experientially derived conceptions of reality, in turn, affect the perception and conception of space. His examination starts with an anecdote, which is worth repeating as it exemplifies this experiential perspective. It explains how one's reception of the Kronberg Castle in Denmark is deeply tied to the castle's attribution as the home of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Without this world knowledge, a visitor to the castle may be struck by an appreciation for its architecture: namely, its sheer size and the fact that human hands built it. But knowing the castle's history (that is, accepting that a Hamlet actually did exist and did live there) changes the castle from simply an old, visually impressive building to an important and often emotionally charged stage for history (Tuan 4-5).

In another relevant paper, Tuan (1991) argues for a focus on the role of language in the creation of place, both in terms of the importance of language in human behavior (e.g., for organizing workers on a building project) and also the importance of language in the symbolic creation of place (that is, the imbuing of place with subjective "meaning"). In this work, an approach he calls "narrative-descriptive,"² Tuan argues that people "build place by verbal means [and that] changes in perception and attitude can seem to alter an environment more markedly than if it had been physically altered" (689). In short, the way we talk about a particular place influences the way we experience it, which in turn impacts the way we know that place.

Tuan's work provides us with a useful way to examine the conceptions, perceptions, and receptions of space among the residents of Princeville.³

THE NORTH CAROLINA LANGUAGE AND LIFE PROJECT INTERVIEWS

Since 2003, Princeville has been a research site of the North Carolina Language and Life Project (NCLLP)⁴ and the data for this study come primarily from recorded sociolinguistic interviews and meetings with inhabitants of the town. In addition to the recorded data from the NCLLP, I have also made some use of interviews with Princeville residents conducted by Jake Halpern for his book (2003) and radio series on National Public Radio (2004).⁵

For this examination, I focus on six individuals: a Town Administrator, a 39 year-old female who grew up just outside of the town limits and spent most of her life in Princeville⁶; a Police Officer, an early-middle-aged male, who lives elsewhere in the rural county, but has been a police officer in Princeville for a number of years (at least preceding the flood of 1999)⁷; AH, a middle-aged female, who was a town commissioner during the flood in 1999⁸; a County Administrator, a 45 year-old female who has lived in Princeville for over twenty years and spent most of her earlier life nearby in the county⁹; TK, a 74 year-old male, who has lived his entire life in or near Princeville and was "famously" among the first to return to Princeville after the flood¹⁰; and, BP, a 50 year-old woman, who works at the local convenience store (one of the only stores in Princeville).¹¹ All of the informants are African American.¹²

In the transcript excerpts below, I normalize most pronunciation to Standard English spellings (other than common spellings like "gonna" for "going to"), though I maintain morphosyntactic features of the speech (such as was-leveling, i.e., "was" for all positive past tense uses of the verb "to be", e.g., "they was over for dinner" for "they were over for dinner," and copula deletion, e.g., "she gonna tell you" for "she's gonna tell you"). Transcription conventions are provided in the Appendix.

THE HOME IN PRINCEVILLE: A CONFIGURATION OF BELONGINGS

Theano Terkenli's article "Home as a Region" explains that, "the strongest sense of home commonly coincides geographically with a dwelling" (324). Along with this, we would generally expect that people's associations with their homes were of a deeply personal nature. In fact, Neil Smith, in a major foray into spatial theory, supports this "traditional" view of the home. He tells us that "although [...]"



The home of Turner Prince, a founding father of Princeville, built in the 1870s. Photo Credit: NC Office of Archives and History

the scale of the body defines the site of personal identity, the scale of the home provides the most immediate context with which this takes place” (Smith 69). However, the discussions in these Princeville data are interesting in that all of the informants other than the County Administrator (who I will return to in a moment) often present a view of the home based more heavily on the things in the home than on a personal connection to the home itself. Passage (1) is representative of the way these informants discuss finding their homes after the flood.

- (1) AH: Things that belonged in the kitchen was in the living room. Things that was in the bedrooms had floated down the hall and was in the office where I worked.

The Police Officer corroborates this view of the home, in (2), when he describes where he was living at the time of the flood. (Before this passage, he talked about being married only days before the flood; the “we” refers to him and his wife.)

- (2)¹³Interviewer: I forgot, were you living in Princeville at the time of the flood? And that’s why you left or?

Police Officer: No, no. I was still staying down at /Sta?/. We never did

get to put our stuff together. We was going to move in to another house.

Interviewer: Oh I see.

Police Officer: But we never did get a chance to put our stuff together.

The Town Administrator also talks about the home as a collection of things, as in excerpt (3), where she is discussing an individual who claims that her home escaped the flood and this is expressed in terms of losing "things."

- (3) Town Administrator: She gonna tell you too. "Outta all the people in Princeville got flooded my house-" ... Now, she said her house did not get flooded out and she didn't lose nothing. Everybody lost everything.

BP does so as well. At one point in her interview, when talking about the flood in general, she abruptly shifts the topic to the loss of her antiques:

- (4) BP: I had a lot of antiques still. And I hate I lost it. You know what I'm- ((Ooo ooo)). Lord have mercy. ((Phew)) I mean I had some ((Ooo)) stuff that you ain't see no more. You know what I'm saying? But, I lost all that stuff in the flood.

The objects in the home clearly take on symbolic importance for these informants. They are not simply things without meaning (cf. Brown), as we might at first glance expect. AH indicates this strong emotional connection:

- (5) AH: I could deal with it. I could deal with everything that I had seen in that flood, until they came to clean out my apartment. And they finally got to the piano to bring it out. It just- it just folded. It just collapsed. It just folded. And that's when I really realized that I was not as strong in the situation as I had taken myself to be. And I broke down and I cried. I had really sacrificed to purchase that piano and I know I'll never own another one.

While this passage is consistent with a "traditional" (e.g., Smith, Terkenli) view of the house as a context for personal identity, it also reinforces a view of the home as an archive of one's belongings. The piano is a personal, historical artifact for AH. Its loss, therefore, reflects a loss of personal history. Tuan provides us with one possible explanation:

One house may look much like another, as in a housing estate, and yet such houses may be very different places to the people who live in

them because, in the one, a [...] kind of dialogue has occurred and, in the other, it has not; in the one [...] a wall with prints on them [sic], has been illumined by the remarks of a friend, and in another, not. (690)

AH's piano is much like Tuan's prints on the wall: It has been imbued with meaning and this meaning, in turn, has further invested the house with significance.

This is not to say that we don't hear more conventional or expected discussions of the home. In fact, the County Administrator generally provides a very spatially differentiated view of the home versus the community:

(6) Interviewer: But what is life like just living here as being your home in Princeville /what is Princeville like/?

County Administrator: Well. I'm very blessed. Before I even get out of my home I thank God for my family. Um, with that, before I even take on any titles. I am a wife and with [being a] wife there comes responsibility. And I'm also a mother and a grandmother. I'm a daughter. I'm a friend. I'm an aunt. I'm all these things, all these different hats, even before I get out of my house. So with that I have to always be remindful of who I am and why I'm here, my purpose. And so I thank God for each day of my life being blessed enough that He has chosen me, along with the people, to once I come out of my house to be a servant for this county.

This calls to mind an image of the house closely aligned with "traditional" views of the home (again cf. Smith, Terkenli). We see in excerpt (6) a very gendered view of the house. The walls of the County Administrator's house divide her life as wife-mother from her life as an important political member of the county. The Town Administrator, in (7), an excerpt of a passage about her mother, also provides a view of the home very much in line with Smith's discussion of the home as the site of "routine acts of social reproduction—eating, sleeping, sex, cleansing, childrearing" (Smith 68).

(7) Town Administrator: And like I said, she just did family things around the house. Cook. Wash clothes. Took care of her garden. She raised us off garden food. And she- she had a garden back of her yard. And she just took care of her garden and her yard. She just was a family person.

However, for the most part the cited passages show that, for at least the residents of Princeville examined thus far, there is some-

thing more complex going on than the home being simply the primary context for their personal identities. Even for the County Administrator, we see her depicting herself as having two personal identities—one as her family-oriented role in the house, the other as her role as a public servant with an orientation outside the home.

Finally, TK's discourse and spatial practices at home reflect a porosity of the public-private aspects of the home that we do not see in the other informants' accounts. TK spends his time on the porch of this house. After the flood, he was among the first to return to the ruined town. Even while living in a FEMA trailer park in the weeks immediately following the flood, he would come every morning to sit under his carport and watch the desolate town. TK does not talk much about the inside of his house or the notion of house as "home". Interestingly, instead he expresses a strong connection to his "lot":

(8) Interviewer: So what made you decide to come back?

TK: Well, you know, it's a long story, but my father worked hard on the farm and bought this place here. /You see his/ house sitting right over there where that vacant lot is. And it was thirteen of us and I was the /onlyest/ one out of that thirteen- the baby died at birth- I was the only one out of that twelve that didn't go to the city. I stayed here the whole while. And one day I was talking about building. And he said "Boo, I was hoping one of my children would build up there aside of me." So he- I'm able to say, he gave me this lot and that's the reason I cherish this lot. And that's the reason I didn't want to leave this lot.

It seems that for TK at least, the "home" is more of a physical piece of the town than a place of privacy or personal space. It is his personal interface with the community and also a link to his past.

THE TOWN IN PRINCEVILLE: A CONFIGURATION OF PEOPLE

The residents of Princeville are keenly aware and proud of the town's unique history. All of the informants talk with pride about Princeville's survival through a long history of hardships, both social and environmental. These views fall in line with Tuan's argument that "the meaning of an actual physical place is the result of historical and social process, built up over time by large and small happenings" (692). Passage (9) demonstrates a conception of Princeville that emphasizes the town's historical importance to the informants.

(9) BP: I love this old town, /the/ reason why I come back home. Uh huh. This is home. You know. Like you say, after the flood, they talk-

ing about moving- what are we gonna move? Not moving Princeville- you can't move Princeville. You know. You can't move Princeville. Where're we going? Too old to start all over again. You know. Talk about moving. Where're we gonna go? We knew what- Back in the day, I /reckon/ the slaves knew and my great-grandmother knew. They knew what they were moving here for. You know what I'm saying? They know- they knew. But this was the town. This was home.

In addition to the expected discussions of town, such as in (9), there is also a strong thread through the informants' accounts that the town is importantly the historical people of the town. This is most directly shown during the tour of Princeville that the Town Administrator gave the interviewers:

- (10) Town Administrator: We had to get our people back in Princeville. We didn't want to lose our town. So we ha- The people what makes the town. So, we wanted the people to get from Rocky Mount back over here.

TK also supports this view that an important aspect of the town is its people when answering a question about what he remembers the town to have been like earlier in his life.

- (11) TK: Well, it was just a small town. Had one police. And I said, had two stores. And had a school- one good thing about it- had a school over here. And Princeville was always a nice- nice little town. A nice little place.

Interviewer: Okay. Kind of a laid back kind of place?

TK: Yes, yes. Nice place. Has some nice peoples in Princeville.

While the County Administrator also reinforces the idea that the people are a crucial component of the community, she stands out from the other informants in that she seems to identify "community" with the greater county more than with Princeville:

- (12) County Administrator: Basically, born in Edgecombe County, reared in Edgecombe County. Parents were sharecroppers. We have just lived from one city to the other city. And, I just love Edgecombe County, calling it my home. Grew up in Edgecombe and surrounding counties- ... My husband and I were looking for land somewhere where we both had- and agreed to- to stay. And so we saw this land and it became our home in 1982. ...

Interviewer: And was there anything else that attracted you to moving in to the area?

County Administrator: Basically, the people. Relationship. Y'know, I've always had some sort of relationship with people- people are my heart. I mean, I have a passion for serving others. That's how I came about with the election as the clerk. It just happen' to be where I live, where I call home. Y'know, you have to have a place to call home. Y'know. You have to have a place to call home and Princeville happen' to be the place that I call home, but my heart is abroad, in this area.

Of course, the County Administrator's past differs from that of the other informants in important ways. She has been a public officer for the county for most of her life and, even though she has lived in Princeville for over twenty years, she makes it clear in her interview—as we see above in (12)—that she considers Princeville to be one town in the county. This is perhaps the best evidence in these data for a social (and socialized) conception of the community. For each of the informants we tease out a different conception of “community” and these conceptions are likely a result of each person's individual life history.

In addition to defining the “town” by connecting it to its people, all six of the informants also hold very personal views of town. Even though, as we saw with the County Administrator in excerpt (12), the scope of the community may differ for each of the individuals, the notion of the “community” appears to carry a great deal of the residents' affection, whereas we saw this tendency less than we might expect when we examined the informants' discussions of their own homes. For example, the Town Administrator and an interviewer had the following exchange while driving past new houses built in the reconstruction effort:

(13) Town Administrator: Like I said, most houses are new now, you know? ((laugh))

Interviewer: Yeah, they're nice looking houses.

Town Administrator: Well, thank you.

In this excerpt, the Town Administrator expresses a personal relationship to all the houses as opposed to her house. In an excerpt from Nick Halpern's radio broadcast (NPR 2004), AH also expresses a very personal connection to the town overall:

(14) AH: I can't remove, y'know, the thought of the rain because I know this is hurricane season. The mud on the trees. The slime on the trees. The slime on the yards. The look and appearance of the homes. It always be there and therefore when it rain it just refreshing all of these memories.



Ray Matthewson, former mayor of Princeville, stands with the Princeville signpost. Photo taken in 1960. Photo Credit: Charlie Killebrew, Braswell Memorial Library, Killebrew Collection, Rocky Mount, NC.

Both of these excerpts, (13) and (14), show pride and tenderness toward the community that we might expect to hear instead about the informants' own homes.

The other residents also echo the notion that the town is better after the reconstruction, because everyone's homes are nicer.

(15) BP: Well, to tell you the truth, to me, it changed, then again it ain't changed. 'Cause it still got the same trees. You know what I'm saying? The same- You know. I reckon the houses are better now than back in the day.

This is not to say that people in Princeville do not show a deep connection to their own homes (recall AH's account in excerpt (5) above). Nonetheless, this strong, personal tie to the entire town seems to emerge from the residents' discussions.

Danesi observes that because such communities are "signifying spaces,"

people perceive their social community as a communal body. This is why we refer to societies as being healthy, sick, vibrant, beautiful, or ugly. Indeed, visitors habitually judge a society instinctively as they would a human person, namely, on how the public spaces appear to the eye – neat, dirty, organized, chaotic, and so on. This is also why a community feels violated "as a single body" if someone defaces its public or sacred places (141).

It makes sense, then, that "the mud on the trees [...] the slime on the yards" (14) is a sort of personal offense to AH. In fact, we might speculate that the importance of the communal body increases inversely with the size of the community, such that in small communities like Princeville we would expect to find such strong attachments to the community overall. Another aspect of the Princeville data that probably influences this finding is that most of the individuals whose comments appear in this essay are political figures in the town and county. Remarks like that in excerpt (13), showing the Town Administrator's pride in the houses in general, may be explainable somewhat as a result of the political lives of these informants.

TOWN, COMMUNITY, AND PRINCEVILLE

As we have noticed, it is often difficult or impossible to differentiate "community" and "town" in the accounts of the Princeville residents. In excerpt (16), we see the Town Administrator attributing a specifically political meaning to the term "town" as that of a politically recognized community.

(16) Town Administrator: This town was a community before it was incorporated.

However, we also see her using "town" in a less concrete way. Recall (10), for example, where she declares "the people [are] what makes

the town.” Meanwhile, the notion of “community” is even more complex. In a later discussion, shown in (17), about Southern Terrace, the neighborhood she lives in, the Town Administrator gives us a sense of fluidity or even confusion as to what comprises the boundaries of the community.

- (17) Town Administrator: I was raised up- It was called Tarboro. Okay. Southern Terrace which I’m gonna show you where that is when we go on a tour. It was called- Southern Terrace was called- was called Tarboro at that time. In 1995, Southern Terrace got annexed to Princeville. And it got annexed in Princeville and it made the population in Princeville become twenty-t- twenty-one hundred people, almost twenty-two hundred people as the population of Princeville. ...
- Interviewer: Now is it all divide- I’m trying to get a picture ‘cause I’m still getting familiar with the border between Tarboro and Princeville. Is it all the- the Tar River that divides it?
- Town Administrator: Yes, it is.
- Interviewer: Okay. So that part that- Southern Terrace. What side of the river is that on?
- Town Administrator: It’s on this side. Princeville.
- Interviewer: But it was Tarboro. So there- at one point [that was Tarboro
- Town Administrator: [We use Tarboro- Princeville- We use- We use Princeville- We use Tarboro address. But actually we was like in the county.
- Interviewer: Okay. Like out a little farther down?
- Town Administrator: Yeah because- We weren’t considered Princeville. We weren’t in Tarboro city limit, but we used Tarboro addresses. ‘Cause you can’t say “Edgecombe, North Carolina.” So we had to have a city address. And actually the whole Princeville- now Princeville trying to get its own zip code. We have the same zip code Tarboro has.

The town is, without doubt, subdivided in the conceptions of these individuals. The notion of community at the “neighborhood”-level though—what I would define as the level of community in which the individuals most consider themselves to “live”—is the hardest to extract from the speech of the informants. For example, we can contrast the County Administrator’s account in (12), focusing on community at the county-level, with the Town Administrator’s discussions, like the following, highlighting Southern Terrace as her most salient community-level through her use of pronouns.¹⁴

- (18) Town Administrator: Southern Terrace is right by Princeville. They annexed us in 1995.



Princeville's new town hall, constructed in 2003. Photo Credit: Drew Grimes.

Another moment that helps to show the challenge in determining a coherent conception of the community appears in discussions of the buy-out the federal government proposed following the destruction of the town by the flood. This buy-out would have meant the political, and probably physical, end of Princeville. AH, who was a commissioner of the town at the time, helps demonstrate the difficulty in figuring out just what Princeville “is” when she declares both that “Princeville is my life” and that “we wanted Princeville to continue to be Princeville”:

(19) AH: I mean, this is my life. Princeville is my life. And I had no place else to go. And I had no- no inkling of an idea how, but we knew that we wanted Princeville to continue to be Princeville and we had to find a way. So, I was not going to vote for a buy-out.

CONCLUSIONS

These data and discussions all lead to the question: Why do the correlations between home and things and town and people seem to arise from the informants' discourse? Tuan's work, I think, helps us move closer to an answer.

Place can acquire deep meaning for the adult through the steady accretion of sentiment over the years. Every piece of heirloom furniture, or even a stain on the wall, tells a story (1977: 33).

That is, perhaps the answer to this question is bound up with Princeville's unique history of flooding and hardship.¹⁵ Terkenli tells us,

More often than not, the home does not become an issue until it is no longer there or is being lost, because the concept of home is constructed on the division of personally known worlds into home and nonhome contexts. (328)

In short, the residents of Princeville have dealt (repeatedly¹⁶) with the loss of their dwellings. It stands to reason that they would have shifted their affection to the community and away from their specific houses. This also relates to their general emphasis on "things." Not only has loss influenced their psychological viewpoint of home, but it has also reinforced the physicality, the objectness, of the home. This proposition also helps to explain the focus on the community in terms of its people and not in terms of the material aspects of the town or community. In spite of the flood(s) and historical hardships, the people in Princeville have remained. A final point may also help to support this hypothesis. Two of the excerpts presented above—(14) and (15)—talk about the trees in the town. On the one hand, we may attribute this to the rural context of the town—perhaps the trees are just more architecturally salient than in more urban environments—but, alternatively, it may also be because the trees are the same trees, as BP herself notes in (15). They represent a constant in the town in a way that not even the houses have been.

Meanwhile, the notion of the "community," even more so than home and town, seems to ebb and flow in complex ways in the discourse of these residents. This may be another result of the political lives of most of the informants,¹⁷ but it may also be result of the inherent ambiguity within the notion of "community." Town and home are more concrete concepts—a home can be destroyed, a town can be "bought out" or abandoned—but a community is a constellation of people, with a shared history, shared hardships, and—as we may be discovering—a shared sense of space.

In closing, following Tuan (1994: 151), the speech samples used here must be acknowledged as no more than the "tip of the iceberg" for understanding Princeville's residents' conceptions, perceptions, and receptions of Princeville's spaces. Nonetheless, this paper has highlighted one important way that we can undertake an actionable "semiotics of space" and better make sense of the spaces and places

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

I use the following conventions for the excerpts contained in this paper:

/ / enclose transcriptions that are not certain.

(()) enclose non-verbal forms of expression, like laughter.

[indicates overlap. In other words, it indicates two speakers speaking at the same time.

. indicates sentence-final intonation.

, indicates clause-final intonation.

? indicates questioning intonation.

- indicates break in utterance without clause- or sentence- final intonation.

... indicates that segments of transcript have been removed. Additionally, I only provide a transcript of the interviewers' utterances when it is relevant. Most of the contributions by the interviewers are merely affirmations that they are paying attention (e.g., "uh-huh" or "yeah") and these have been suppressed without indication for sake of clarity and brevity.

NOTES

1. In truth, there appear to be about as many approaches to the semiotics of space as there are scholars of it. As Gottdiener and Lagopoulos' collection of essays on "urban semiotics" demonstrates, the major figures in the study of the semiotics of space (Greimas, Eco, Barthes, etc.) all have differing approaches to a theory of "urban semiotics," ranging from a search for ideology (cf. Greimas) to a search for a generative grammar of space (cf. Boudon). Meanwhile, a handful of other scholars (not included in the Gottdiener and Lagopoulos volume) have also written on spatial semiotics from other perspectives, such as Milton Singer's "semiotic anthropology." Of course, other scholars have also made major contributions to our understanding of space and place from other less explicitly semiotic viewpoints (e.g., Lefebvre, de Certeau).

Importantly, Gottdiener and Lagopoulos point out that, although they use the term “urban semiotics,” they use the term to include all “forms of settlement space, such as villages, tribal camps, and the like” (1). Other scholars tend to neglect the non-urban in their forays into spatial questions.

2. Tuan presents a persuasive argument for an explicitly theory-light approach to spatial inquiry. He writes, “in a narrative-descriptive approach [...] the explicit formulation of theory is not attempted, if only because such a theory, by its clarity and weight, tends to drive rival and complementary interpretations and explanatory sketches out of mind, with the result the object of study—a human experience, which is almost always ambiguous and complex—turns into something schematic and etiolated” (1991: 686).

3. This paper follows Tuan’s work and focuses on discourse-level spatial interrogations. One alternative approach would be to examine linguistic features—such as deictics for example—in their role in the production and conception of space. For a brief example of this, we can look at pronouns in the speech of the Princeville residents. As we might expect, the Town Administrator often identifies herself with Princeville proper, as when she explains “we didn’t want to lose our town” (presented in excerpt (10)) and expresses solidarity with (and for) the town through her use of pronouns. While this may be in line with our expectations, we do find examples where the Town Administrator distances herself from the town of Princeville—such as in excerpt (18)—where she tells us “they annexed us” (that is, Princeville annexed Southern Terrace) and aligns herself, using “us,” with the residents of Southern Terrace, in opposition to the “them” of Princeville proper. As I said, a more complete analysis of linguistic features—even just of pronoun usage—would be interesting and illustrative of the subtle ways that the inhabitants both make the town through their speech and at the same time have their ideologies shaped by the town. However, further examination along these lines will have to remain as work for the future.

4. For more information about the NCLLP, see <<http://www.ncsu.edu/linguistics/ncllp/>>.

5. While the sociolinguistic and media interview data may not seem at first to be the best format for gaining empirical discourse on place and the semiotic reception of place, it does provide a good starting point. In fact, Tuan might agree that this dataset is better than many others researchers have access to. Tuan comments, “the felt quality of a place can never be fully revealed by describing the physical structures and noting the ways people move in them. Nor is it merely a stable attribute that can be elicited through the use of restrictive questionnaires. Such approaches have evident value, but they must be supplemented by studying a people’s speech as it appears naturally in the course of day-to-day living and on more dramatic occasions” (1978: 372).

6. The data on the Town Administrator are comprised of two NCLLP interviews, one an interview in her office and the other a short tour of Princeville where she drove the interviewers around town while talking to them about Princeville.

7. Data on the Police Officer are taken from a short tour he gave an interviewer of the town.

8. AH's excerpts are entirely from Nick Halpern's series on NPR.

9. Data on the County Administrator are taken from one, approximately one hour long, NCLLP interview.

10. TK is a central figure in Nick Halpern's (2003) account of Princeville in *Braving Home*. He has also been interviewed extensively by the NCLLP and the excerpts presented in this paper are from the NCLLP interviews. I describe TK as "famously" being the first to return to Princeville, because he is talked about by others in town and it was his solitary vigil in the ruined Princeville that brought Halpern to focus on him.

11. BP's data are taken from a 45-minute NCLLP interview.

12. Also, it is worth noting, even though I do not focus on this aspect of the informants' social lives, that religion plays a huge role in the lives of all six informants. In fact, religion plays a large role in almost everyone's life in Princeville. All six informants discuss religion at length in their interviews (for example, see excerpt (6)).

13. Again, transcription conventions are provided in the Appendix.

14. See note 3.

15. Of course, some parts of Princeville's history are not completely unique. It's impossible to discuss flooded communities and spatial inquiries in the post-Hurricane Katrina United States without acknowledging the deep relevance of these sorts of questions and findings for the thousands of displaced residents of New Orleans and the Gulf region following Hurricane Katrina. While this paper hasn't discussed this parallel, the destruction of Princeville in 1999 and its subsequent reconstruction has a great deal to teach us about the massive impact that Hurricane Katrina has had and will continue to have on its Gulf Coast victims.

16. Princeville experienced catastrophic flooding not only in 1999, but also in a flood in the 1950s, an event that most of the informants here are old enough to remember, or at least to have heard a great deal about.

17. As mentioned earlier, four of the six individuals examined here have political roles in the town and county. It is likely that, in their interviews, these informants are enacting their roles as representatives of the town (and, for the County Administrator, the county) and that this influences their discourse in the data. It is possible that the complexity we see in the discussions of community and spatial boundaries is a result of the political lives of these informants. In analyzing these passages it is difficult to keep track of the roles that the individuals enact and the changes in these roles over the course of their interviews. The questions of how much this

impacts their discourse—that is, whether it is misleading in relation to their “real” conceptions of place (whatever that might mean)—and, oppositely, to what level their political roles have affected their overall personal ideologies, will have to remain for future research.

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Mule Musings and Mule Mania... Benson Traditions

By Charlotte G. Spradling

The hearts of Benson's residents lie within the legend of the mule. In central North Carolina, where the Piedmont and Coastal Plains meet, thousands of visitors and local residents assemble each year to pay tribute to the mule in fields that still grow tobacco, cotton, corn, yams and soybeans. September 2007 will usher in the 58th year of the annual Mule Days festival, a festival that has grown to crowds numbering 50,000 to 70,000. People from various states including Texas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee will gather a short distance from the intersection of I-95 and I-40 for an event that is anticipated from one year to the next.

Benson, North Carolina, is an example of an agricultural community that once depended on the mule, the mule-trading business, and the railroad as a means of economic sustenance and commercial development. Today, this small town of 3,300 remains anchored in mule mania, and the town still finds its economic dependence firmly rooted in the mule. A close examination of this community and its associations with its iconic symbol reveal not only a century-

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Frame photo: The Puckett family with their prizewinning mules at a Tennessee event, 2005.

old mule-trading tradition, but a pride and affection for the animal and the image that has come to be associated with it: the mule.

Before moving to Louisiana, I had lived in one of the surrounding communities of Benson for nearly thirty years. I had always managed to avoid the bustle of the well-known festival. Mule Days was something that I had heard about since I was a child and was cautioned to avoid. It was known as a brawling, rambling event for intoxicated observers and aspiring cowboys. But like many things in life, time mellows circumstances, and the festival has morphed into a fun, family festival. The festival consists of parades, rodeos, bluegrass music, and beauty pageants for mules and women alike, along with various other mule competitions. In September 2005, during my flight from Hurricane Rita, along the Gulf Coast, I was sent scurrying into the path of Benson's Mule Days celebrations.

My accidental journey into the path of the Mule Days parade caused me to question the reasons for the survival of the festival and the fascination that would draw such crowds. I was determined to understand why the mule, a hybrid creature that is unable to reproduce on its own, had not simply died out after its usefulness to agriculture had diminished. It was through the research for my Master's thesis "Brownie, Little Nell, Ol' Red, Ol' Mag...Mules and Their Men—A Cultural Revival" that I met, interviewed, recorded, and celebrated the existence of the mule with enthusiasts eager to share their experiences.

As I gathered information, recollections of mule-stories conjoined with present day events to produce a tapestry of mule affections that I could never have imagined. This article offers a panoramic view of Benson's mule mania and mule musings, ranging from the essential farming mule of the 1920s to the four-legged recreational vehicle of the new millennium. This cultural heritage envelops a multitude of customs, old and new traditions, and historical documentations to reveal a recovered tradition nourished by a small group of people determined to keep their symbol alive and well.

My research on Benson's legendary mule began with Loretta Byrd, Director of the Benson Area Chamber of Commerce, who referred me to participants Harold Medlin, Paul Dunn, and Robie Dunn. Mr. Medlin, eighty-two, is a local historian and life-long resident of Johnston County. Robie Dunn, eighty-two, and his son Paul Dunn, forty-seven, have roots that span more than three generations working with and around mules. In the 1800s, Robie's father was a muleskinner—a person who trains mules—for Benson's residents who

had purchased their mules from local dealers for agricultural purposes. Paul Dunn is the second-generation owner of Mule City Specialty Feeds in Benson. In 1956, Robie, along with a partner, started the business by transporting a portable milling station around the countryside in the back of a truck, selling specialty feeds to local farmers. Two years later, in 1958, he bought out his partner. He transferred the business to Paul eleven years ago.

After surviving the decline of the mule-trading business in the 1950s and 60s, the business began to boom in the 80s and 90s when mules, once again, became popular, but for very different reasons. As they became popular for selective breeding, competition, rodeos, races, shows, entertainment, and recreation, contemporary mule traditions began to spring up in other parts of the country, including celebrations much like those in Benson. In addition to the Mule Days events in Benson, which are the largest events in the country, there are at least three other major mule celebrations in the United States; the second-largest and oldest is in Columbia, Tennessee; one that focuses on packing and camping is held in Bishop, California; and one is celebrating its twenty-second anniversary, this year, in Clarke County, Missouri.

These practices all represent recovered traditions based on a “folk object,” the mule. Folklorist Elliott Oring explains that “folk objects commonly have to do with everyday life—the needs of shelter, work, prayer, and play—[so these] objects may help us to re-experience something of that everyday past” (200). As a folk object, the mule shapes Benson’s society through annual celebrations, events, fellowship, memorabilia, and fun. These activities reflect a cultural heritage inspired by the mule. In order to understand the importance of this cultural heritage, there needs to be an established connection between the two. Cultural heritage is a condition over which successive generations have no immediate or conscious control. It embodies the social customs, traditions, and in many instances, religious rituals of past generations. It is passed from generation to generation, and will change over time. It is this condition of change that invites new traditions to stem from the core of the cultural heritage. In his book *The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity*, David Gross sets a standard to determine the authenticity of cultural heritage:

For any tradition to be authentic, it would seem that at least three conditions need to be satisfied. First, at the very minimum a tradition must link together three generations (i.e., two transmissions) [...].



This “hog killing” in the Benson agricultural community was an example of social and cultural gatherings that depended on the mule. Benson Museum Photo.

Second, a tradition, in conveying a sense of the past in the present, must not merely represent something old or ancient, but must also carry a certain amount of spiritual or moral prestige. Third, a tradition must convey a sense of continuity between the past and present. [...]. A tradition also has to give one a feeling that it has been sequentially passed down through time, that it has the force of temporal duration behind it. Then, upon receiving a tradition, one feels part of something continuous, as if one were a link in a chain stretching back in time. (10)

These conditions are evident in Paul and Robie’s relationship with each other and with their relationship to the mule. Paul represents the current trend in the creation of material mule culture that has been established from a cultural heritage experiencing new and changing traditions centered on a folk object. Robie is the recipient of the cultural heritage that was passed to him from his father, the muleskinner. Robie passed the heritage to Paul, who now participates in mule-related culture. The Dunn family is typical of many families in the Benson area who celebrate mule traditions.

One unique feature about this cultural heritage is that Paul is a part of the cultural revival that celebrates the mule, even though he has never owned one, a situation shared by many others that participate in Mule Days. The new customs and traditions established from

the transferal of this cultural heritage reflect the continuity of the folk object, and thus maintain and renew the cultural inheritance for the next generation. However, these traditions are in constant flux, conditioned by societal influence and newly established customs, e.g. parades, rodeos, pageants, etc.

BENSON'S HISTORICAL MULES AND TRADITIONS

The search for Benson's mules begins long before Benson's first Mule Days, held in 1950. It begins in a time after George Washington introduced the mule to the American farmer, and before the mule, as an agricultural necessity, was replaced by modern inventions. Mr. Medlin recalls how Benson received its stock of mules in the 30s, 40s, and 50s:

Mules were not generally raised in the area; there could be some exceptions. They were shipped in from Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Georgia and Arkansas. Our mules arrived on trains. They came in stock cars—the mules, being unloaded, fed, watered and rested every thirty-six hours at facilities operated by the rail lines. This was required by law and was observed by the rail lines very carefully. There would be, perhaps, twenty or forty mules in a car. Upon arriving, they would be unloaded at the stock chute and pen which was located here in Benson on the railroad track next to the automobile unloading platform. A mare horse would be brought to the pen, and the mules would follow it to the proper barn, usually right down Main Street. Everybody could see the new models trotting smartly behind this momma of them all. (1)

Mr. Medlin relates that there were approximately twelve to sixteen livery stables operating at the height of the mule trading business, probably in the late 30s to mid 40s. These stables represented a substantial number of mule trading businesses for a town the size of Benson, but they were necessary due to the large farming community surrounding the town.

Purchasing the family mule was a major event and expense. The criteria for selection were usually based upon physical appearance, health, age and temperament. Robie's father trained him in mule inspections. When asked about what qualities to look for when purchasing a new mule, he gave a specific warning against purchasing a mule with a club-foot and advised that the average age of a mule, when newly purchased, was around two or three years old.

Many times, potential purchasers would look into the mouth of the mule. Donald Parnell, a resident of Goldsboro, N.C., explained

one of the deceptive practices dealers would resort to in order to disguise the age of the mule:

They would look at the teeth. The older they got, the longer the teeth got. You know, like on cars, they run the miles back on them to fool people. On mules, they file the teeth off. They filed the teeth off, to make them shorter—think they were younger mules.

These practices were not uncommon for dealers looking to make a profit off of their deformed or aging mule.

Mr. Medlin tells that the dealers usually received fresh mules twice a year, and when old mules were traded for new ones, it was customary for the older mule to be traded with “boot,” money to compensate for the age of the older mule. If a mule died, it was an expensive but necessary investment to buy another one:

They were expensive and had to be replaced at any cost. This, like most transactions of mule buying or trading, was usually on a credit. There would be papers or notes made—with the wife brought in to co-sign it. Not only was the mule security for the debt, but all livestock, crops, wagons, farming tools, furniture and everything they owned were listed on the note. Momma said once, or more, that it seemed like Pappa always owed for the mule.

His account demonstrates the typical mule transaction for that time and the importance of mules to both the community and the survival of the farm family.

The high population of farmers and extensive agricultural interests in the area made mule-trading a lucrative business for livery stables located inside the city. Farmers from small towns and communities (Four Oaks, Clayton, Meadow, Dunn, Coats, Plainview, Erwin, Elevation, and Ingrams), along with rural residents, all gathered from time to time in Benson for spring previews of the newest stock of mules.

Mule society, for both the city dwellers and the farming community in central North Carolina, was founded on the ability to integrate farming skills with mules in order to grow food, and from this ability stemmed all other necessities for surviving the harsh winters in the Carolina Piedmont. Farmers relied on mules for preparing the soil, planting and harvesting crops, logging, and clearing land for new fields. The farmer was dependent on the mule for transportation when trading goods with country stores and for transporting a doctor to rural homes for medical emergencies. Deceased family members were transported by mule and wagon to their final resting place, usually a fenced family plot in the middle of a field.

The number of mules owned was determined by the amount of acreage a family had to tend. David Snead, seventy-four, describes the methods used to determine the number of mules a family might own.

Well, a one-mule farm, usually fifteen acres, is what a one-mule farm was, and a two-mule farm was, you know, twenty or twenty-five acres or thirty. If you broke a acre a day with one mule and plow you were doing pretty good.

The productive interactions between the surrounding farm communities and Benson city merchants were indications that dual dependencies lay across the back of the Southern farm mule. Merchants supplied mules and farm equipment but relied on the farmer to bring in his harvest of summer and fall goods, along with salted meat, to town. The farmer depended on the spring supply of mules and sporadic trips to town for fabrics, farm supplies, and friendly conversations. City and country society were tightly knit, but there were some activities that were solely performed in rural areas. David explains one facet of farm life in rural Johnston County:

My granddaddy would kill hogs, have a big hog killin', and he would trade his meat for fertilizer—salt his meat down and trade it for fertilizer. That's what they done, traded stuff for when they went to town. See, town folks had to eat that meat, and of course, a lot more folks lived in the country. You didn't go to the store back there every week. You might not go but one or two times—three times a year, because you had what they call country stores around. They had just about everything you wanted. You didn't have no fresh meat much to eat—now that's something good. You had to salt your meat down; you can't kill no more than you could eat in the summertime.

David relates that other community and farming events, such as tobacco barning, corn shucking, cotton picking, barn raising and wood splitting, depended on the mule as well.

Since small farmers were so dependent on mules, many had to use them seven days a week. Hitching the farm wagon to the mule was the standard method of transportation for attending Sunday church services. Mules were not the preferred method of riding, but most Southern farm families "could not afford to feed a horse and a mule, too" (Parnell). Location of residency and class status usually indicated which animal, horse or mule, the family kept. "Families in town used horses and surreys while country families used wagons and mules" (Parnell).

Farm life was not all work. Many family members became fond of their family mule. When asked about his favorite mule, Robie Dunn tells of play times on the farm with their family mules:

I believe that Ol' Mag—she was long, big, long-legged—my brother could really ride 'em bareback, and back in those days we didn't have any toys or anything, bicycles or tricycles to play with. In the spring of the year, when they had burnt off hedges and those new reed sprouts come out—they were tender, and mules loved 'em real good. Our daddy, he'd say, on Saturday or Sunday when we weren't busy, he'd say, "Boys take the mules and carry 'em down yonder and let 'em graze on those green shoots," but he knew what we'd do when we got out of sight of the house; we'd play Cowboys and Indians. We rode them horses and mules all over them long woods.

Not only was the mule important to the farm, it was necessary for clearing land for future fields, logging, military uses, and for mining in various parts of the country. Reliance on the mules in the Johnston County area lasted from the 1920s to the 1950s, after which time the tractor began to replace the family farm mule on a grand scale.

MECHANICAL MULES: THE END OF AN ERA

The period beginning after World War II and continuing through the 1950s witnessed the transition from mules to tractors in rural North Carolina. The agricultural landscape was changing; the use of tractors altered farming methods. Once tractors became improved and affordable, farmers began to trust in their dependability; the decline of mule populations was imminent. Although tractors had been in production since the late 1890s, they were not immediately available; however, by 1928 some were seen scattered across the rural Southern landscape. The first tractors duplicated steam engines used on railroads, making them too large, powerful, and cumbersome for small farming. They were mainly used in sawmills and for threshing wheat and hay. Bobby Joyner, collector of antique tractors, explains that these tractors did not quickly replace the mule in the South, particularly in North Carolina. The ground was too soft for the heavy engines and the steel wheels became bogged in the mud, requiring that mules be teamed together in order to pull them from the fields.

The first tractors of the 1920s were powered with gasoline and then converted to kerosene. Gas engines were expensive to maintain. They used thirty to fifty gallons of gas a day at twelve to fifteen cents a gallon. Small farmers had to rebuild the tractor's engine within two to three years of purchase and larger farmers needed to rebuild

every year. During the 1930s, the fallout from the Depression prevented farmers from purchasing tractors, keeping the Southern farmer dependent on the mule. The first affordable engine arrived in the late 30s. It was the Ford 9-N, but most farmers could not afford to buy anything, and after that, there was the war (Joyner).

Although World War II initially caused a decline in the production of tractors, it subsequently sparked a rise in productivity. New technological innovations were achieved through the production of war equipment, and these were used to make better tractors. After the war, improved agricultural machinery surged onto the rural farm market.

It was not until the late 50s when diesel engines made a significant impact on the farming industry, and switching to a tractor became a reasonable option for most small North Carolina farmers. These diesel engines were more fuel efficient, burning only a tank a day. (Joyner)

This new development of mechanical technology made farming with the mule obsolete and impractical as the post-war economy opened the way for agricultural advancements. "The number of horses and mules peaked at almost 26 million in 1920 and declined to less than 4 million in 1958" (Ferris 192). The farmer no longer had to reserve a significant portion of his crops to feed his mule. Instead, production of agricultural products boomed, and the money saved went to buy fuel for newly purchased farm equipment.

From the 1950s forward, mules faded quickly from the Southern farming way of life. Of the mule markets in the U.S., however, the Southern market remained the strongest and had the highest prices in the nation until the 1960s.

When southern farmers bought tractors, this last mule market disappeared and the animals were slaughtered for animal food. During the 1950s, half the horses and mules sold by farmers each year—more than 357,000—were converted into cat and dog food. Their death signaled the end of an era. (Ferris 192)

To many residents in Southern communities, it was a necessary but sad fate. If the mule was to be remembered, something had to fill the void. In order to preserve the social and cultural heritage of the area, two Benson businessmen merged ideas, creating a way to memorialize the mule in their community.

RECOVERING BENSON'S MULE CULTURE

Willis McLamb, a mule trader in the 1940s, and Nowell Smith, a Benson business owner, started Mule Days in 1950. McLamb, now eighty-seven, started a rodeo, the only one in North Carolina, as an event at Mule Days. Street dances, bluegrass music, food, camping, parades, pageants, and competition events soon joined the rodeo.

Although Benson's Mule Day celebration is not the oldest in the South, it is believed to be the longest uninterrupted mule festival in the country. The interactions between mules and men are demonstrated each year at the Benson Mule Days festivities, and many of the events still reflect folk traditions. As a judge for the events, Paul Dunn explains the activities, which span nearly four days:

On Friday mornings of Mule Day weekend, people come from four or five states; they bring their mules. We start at 10 a.m. on the Friday morning of Mule Day. We class them according to size and age, and they show them before a judge. Then, they go into other events, like the ridin' events. They have what's called a "coon jump." [...] a horse jumps on a run; a mule jumps like a rabbit. He'll stop, go up on his hind legs and pop over. I think they told me the record is like, six-foot-eight-inches, and, you know, like the limbo bar used to try to go low; they want to see how high they can go. It's pretty amazing to watch one go that high. They start standing still right at, like, right here's the bar under their breast, and then, they'll just rare back and go up.

Other popular events that Paul describes are barrel races, mule racing, pulling contests, matched pairs, and one very popular event called the "mule-stick race," in which children leg race against each other with stick mules.

In earlier years, Robie, like Paul, was involved in organizing events for Mule Days. They describe one extremely popular event from former days:

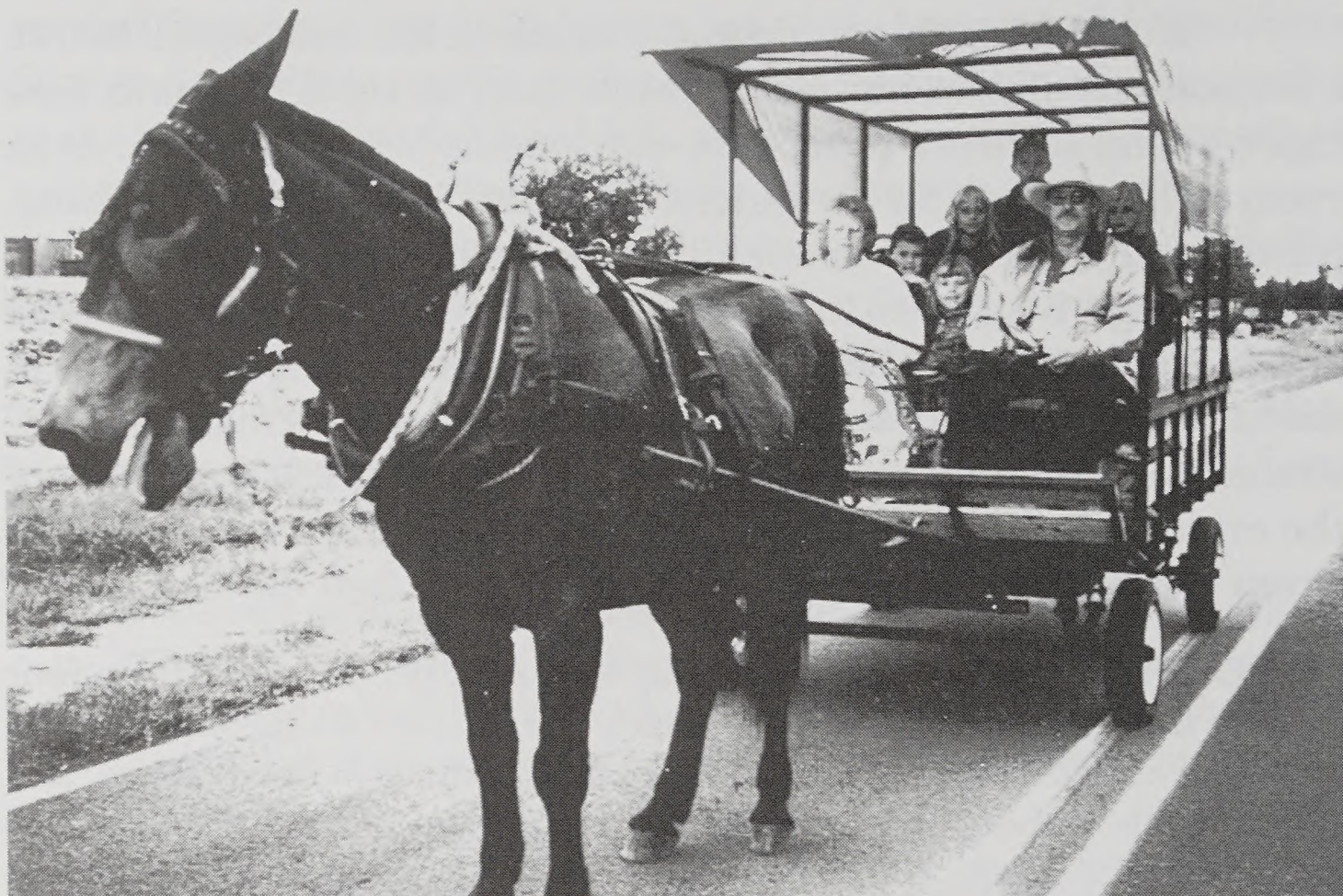
RD: Way back, when the mule got to be pretty popular at Mule Day, we had a Governor's race. Any governor in the United States could send his name in, and we'd put somebody on a mule and race him in the Governor's Race.

PD: He started the original mule race....

RD: I was in charge of that for the first year or two—the Governor's Races—and ever who won got a nice trophy; we'd mail it to 'em and Governor....

PD: George Wallace....

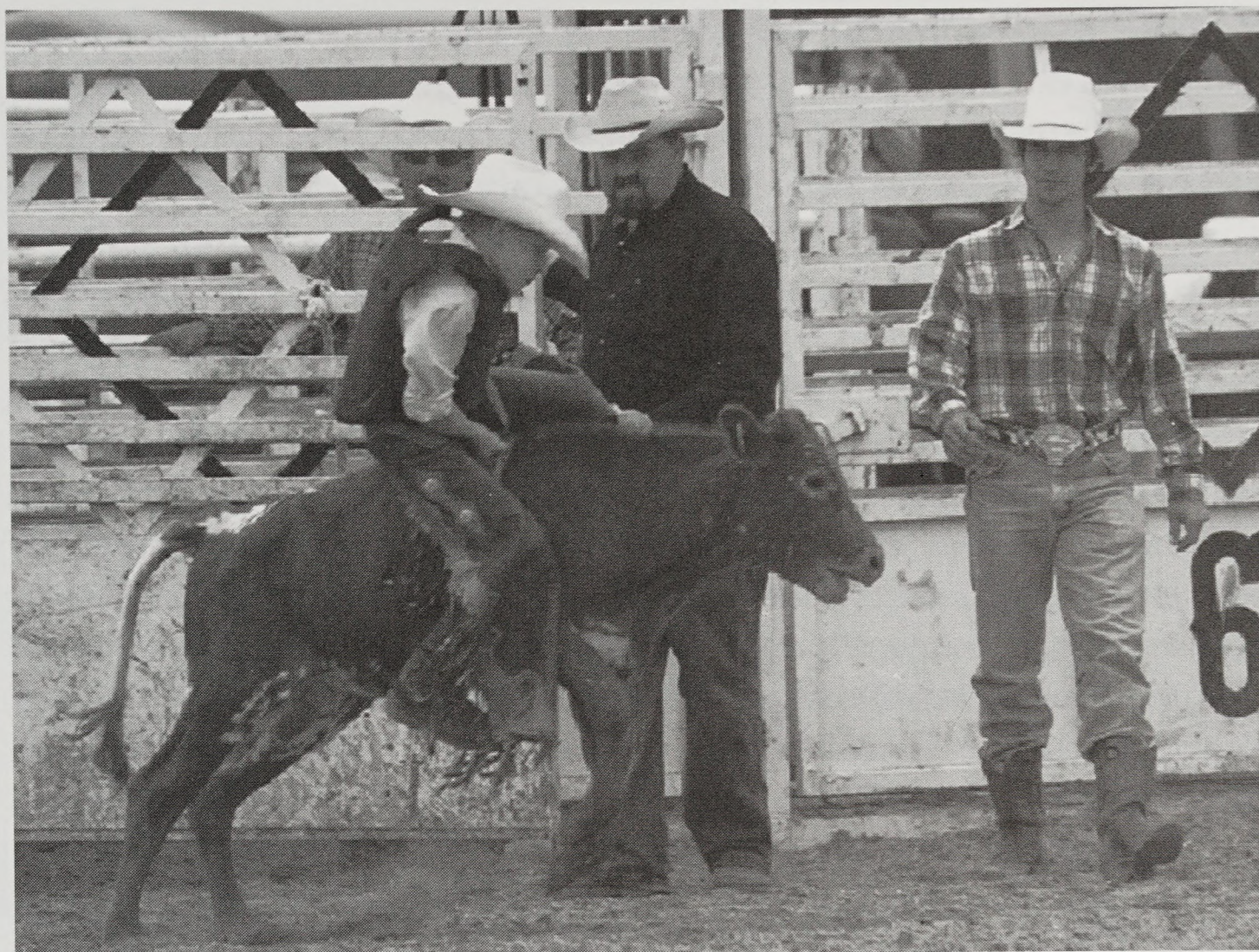
RD: He sent his own mules up here for the mule race.



Price Family with mule-drawn cart, Benson Mule Days. Photo courtesy of City of Benson.



Mule race at 2004 Benson Mules Days. Photo by Ken Tart.



Calf-riding and sheep-riding events at Children's Rodeo. Photos by Ken Tart.

They go on to explain that although the event with Governor Wallace's mules was a very effective publicity stunt, his mules were no competition for Benson's own.

In addition to the mule being the catalyst for such popular events, Paul and Robie's mutual interests reflect enjoyment of their cultural heritage and have helped construct a mule culture through "symbolic interaction," the construction of personal identity through shared interests. Ruth Wallace, quoting George Mead, explains that shared cultural symbols, like Benson's mules, "arouse the same attitudes in the individuals making them that they arouse in the individuals responding to them" (203). This community is an example of a town and its friends who out of necessity became associated with mules, but who now enjoy the fellowship of mules as recreational companions in rebuilding, establishing, and reviving traditions. In order for this or any subculture to sustain itself and expand, it must find common ground with others that share the same attachments.

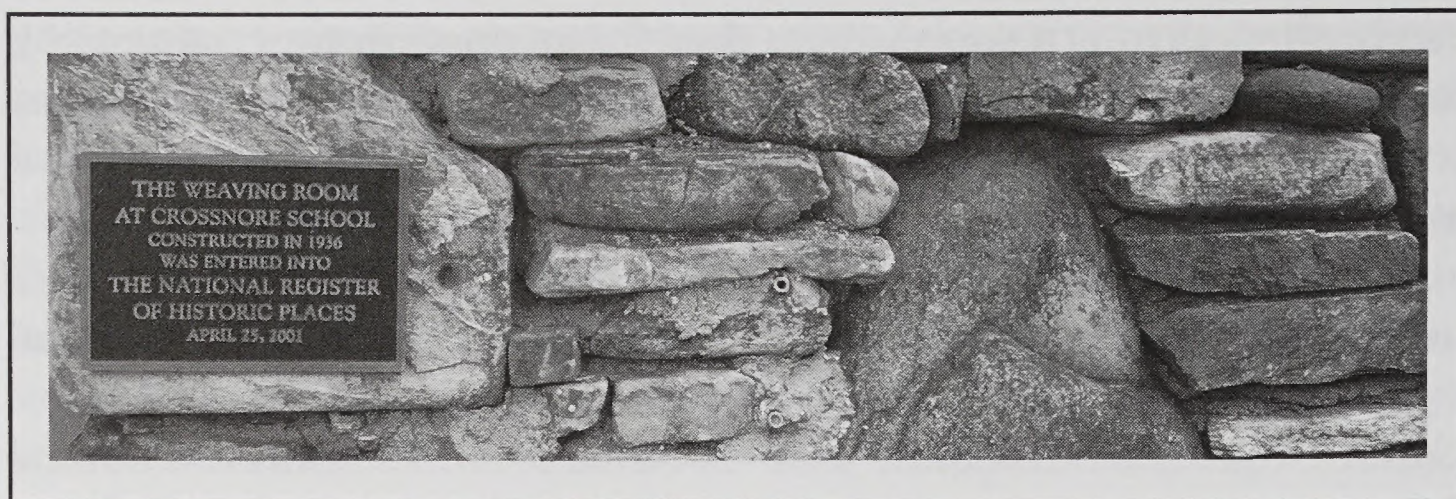
Betty and Shorty (William Earl) Lee's involvement with mules is an example of the extent that these attachments and identities can reach. This couple has lived in the Benson area for over fifty years and has never missed a Mule Day. Much of their family identity is grounded in mule culture and traditions. Every year, Betty and Shorty load their homemade wagon with their grandchildren for the ten-mile trip to Mule Days where they join their own children at their predestined campsite. It is the family's tradition to spend their annual vacation with friends and to enjoy the company of their mules. Their family tradition is part of the reviving mule culture in America today, but it is only one element that goes into composing mule traditions. Throughout the United States, new mule traditions are established as old interests and attachments whisper from the past.

Today's mule is not yesterday's beast of burden. For some, mules have become a new kind of business opportunity and venture. For others, it is a means of relaxation and fellowship. Weekend packing trips, family outings, or country rides contribute to mule obsessions. The love of the mule found its way into today's contemporary society by being framed around recreation and hobbies. It is an avenue for those who treasure a nostalgic remembrance of the past and seek ways to enjoy a common passion with those creating new traditions. Mule Days celebrations in other cities around the United States verify that mules are no longer solely recognized as work animals. Interest in them today is based on their value as luxury items for hobbyists. In Tennessee, still a major supplier of mules, new traditions are being

established through social clubs that focus on genetic engineering to produce mules with desirable physical and temperament characteristics. These events are oriented to the presentation of national awards and result in the exchange of large sums of money for desirable mules. Theresa Puckett, a Tennessee mule breeder, participates in such traditions. Two of her gaited, spotted mules won national awards in 2005, presented by the American Council of Spotted Asses. Other events, such as those in Benson, are centered on traditional folk activities and folk culture rooted in mule customs that define a social system and bring economic benefits to their communities. For Benson, Mule Days is now the town's major event and makes a major contribution to its financial stability. Soon the older generation who still remember their first-hand experiences of agrarian life with mules will sadly fade, but Benson's mule mania will go on.

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Book Reviews

Merriman, Tim, and Lisa Brochu. *The History of Heritage Interpretation*. Fort Collins, Colorado: National Association for Interpretation, 2006. 104 pp.

Reviewed by Teri Brewer

This is a small book, long on promise, possibly premature in delivery. It will attract the attention of folklorists and others involved in cultural interpretation, but though assembled by respected authorities on natural resource and environmental interpretation and planning, the book does not deliver the historical overview and reflection that the title suggests. Brief essays by a number of leading figures from National Association for Interpretation (NAI) are interspersed with the core text, and the whole is published as a sort of preliminary edition for a limited print-run that explicitly calls for amendments and expansion in a second edition. As it stands, this book is more about the NAI than it is about the history of heritage interpretation, which is a much larger and more complex field than is indicated in any way here. NAI now seeks to become the recognized voice of interpretation in the United States through promotion of its training programs, publications, conferences and other activities and is now reaching out more directly to those already involved; hence this book. But if the book is more about the professional organization than about the history of the heritage interpretation in the U.S. in general, what does it offer to those (like most folklorists) on the outside the organization?

Frame photo: The newly opened Weaving Room Museum at the Crossnore School received a grant from the Blue Ridge Heritage Area.

The forward and preface certainly mention cultural interpretation in passing, but primarily as an adjunct to nature interpretation. The two-page first chapter, *Keepers of the Culture*, sketches an analogy between the modern interpretive specialist and tribal knowledge-keepers, Greek dramatists of the classical era, and epic poets. All are linked by the power of good performance to compel and connect audiences to resources (both cultural and natural) whether around the campfire or in a modern interpretation facility. This opening is followed by a discussion of explorers of the North American continent like Lewis and Clark, using them as a kind of bridge between the predominantly naturalist-focused previous work of the NAI and wider developments in cultural interpretation.

Once the authors turn to documenting the history of the interpretive profession in the U.S. they focus almost entirely on NAI organizational history while ignoring the broader picture. This emphasis means there is weirdly little mention of cultural interpretation per se, except in passing, since that has not been a major aspect of the NAI's work until more recently. Furthermore, most of the figures discussed are people who played a major role in the thinking of the authors and many others in the NAI and the National Park Service but who may be less well known outside that circle.

Finally there is a discussion of professional trends which offers little comment on some of the particular challenges of cultural interpretation. There is a clear call for interpreters to ensure their jobs by emphasizing the need for measurable outcomes and coordination with organizational missions. This is a rational approach, but ignores the complexity of the current situation with cultural interpretation in which more people make careers as independent consultants to a number of different organizations.

The book is enhanced by a series of short opinion pieces presented as guest essays. This multi-vocality is a good idea and should be retained in future editions, but the format here means that these guest essays almost overwhelm the substantive content of the main text. An appendix offers a very preliminary list of historically important contributors to the field, together with a list of those who have won recognition or awards from the NAI over the years.

There is really surprisingly little serious discussion of the challenges and issues facing those in cultural interpretation given that many NAI members have strong background in this area. The quality of some of the organization's other publications leads readers to expect something up to the same standards in regard to cultural in-

terpretation. A new edition, fully augmented and in dialogue with the larger community may well be a truly useful book. However, this first edition feels like a sketch for the first draft of that book.

North Carolina is a state that has a history of distinction in both developing and critiquing cultural interpretation practices. North Carolina's experiences with interpretation range from the activities of the nineteenth-century settlement house movement to the Blue Ridge Heritage Initiative. No hint of this powerful regional contribution is visible in this book, but I certainly hope that folklorists in North Carolina will engage with Brochu and Merriman's excellent intentions and contribute some local insights and bibliography for this developing history of cultural interpretation.

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Reviewed by Krysten Buchanan

Answering the question "Will this be on the final?" may prove a difficult job for teachers who decide to use this text-book. I should probably begin by saying that I am not a folklorist, but an English literature student who enjoys reading and studying folktales. Perhaps it is because of this background that I so thoroughly enjoyed the text *Living Folklore*. Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens presented the study of folklore in terms that were understandable, beginning with a smaller concept and then gradually building onto it throughout the chapters, "allowing the definitions and your understanding of those concepts to develop" (xii). The way that they defined what folklore was, and more specifically what it was not, in straightforward language allowed me to enter into studying the field of folklore without feeling overwhelmed or confused.

Their first chapter attempts to tackle what folklore is, including their working definition along with the definitions from leading scholars in the field, genres of folklore, folklore beyond genre labels, and a history of folklore study. The rest of the book follows the same pattern of dividing the text into smaller and more manageable sections, constantly referring back to key ideas and definitions. They

also chose to incorporate examples that most readers are familiar with, such as Pokemon cards and record store employees, intermingled with new concepts in order to encourage “natural curiosity” (xii). The second chapter addresses what folk groups are, what types there are, and how they form. The “urban legend” that the KKK was somehow linked to the Popeye’s fast food chain is the example in this chapter, along with the examples of folklore in the music store and folklore in the choosing of schoolmates’ nicknames, used to illustrate the different ways that folk groups form and how they operate. The third chapter utilizes the folk art of two southern men to demonstrate tradition, including what it is, how it forms, the dynamic and conservative elements, and the question of authenticity. Chapter Four covers the study of rituals including the definition of ritual, types of ritual, the question of belief in sacred and secular ritual, and the study of liminality and ritual space. They use the step shows of African-American organizations to connect the various sections.

Chapter Five uses a very different example, the recitation of proverbs, to illustrate performance and its texture, context, emergence, and aesthetics. The example at the end of the chapter is a dialogue between two friends that allows folklorists, according to the authors, to shift “away from a limited examination of fixed, static, or flat objects that encourages our attention to the lively communication that takes place through the sharing of folklore” (173). The authors continually broaden the scope of what constitutes folklore through the various examples provided. This trend continues in chapter five when the authors use not only classic fairy tales, but knock-knock jokes to illustrate the ideas behind the structuralist approach to interpreting folklore. Along with structuralism, they also explore functionalism, psychoanalytic interpretation, and the post-structuralist approaches of feminist interpretations, reciprocal ethnography, and intersectionality. Chapter Seven, focusing on fieldwork and ethnography, begins by explaining how to collect data, which they title “The Nuts and Bolts of Fieldwork” (203). Under this heading are the subtopics of finding ideas, getting started in fieldwork, developing and asking good questions, field notes, and transcribing and transcripts. Along with descriptions, there are examples provided, such as samples of field notes. This chapter also addresses “The people factor: interpersonal and ethical concerns” through study of insider and outsider roles, observation and participant-observant, rapport, and ethics (218). Chapter eight consists of four essays that the authors chose because they shed light on different aspects of the study of folklore

that have been previously explained. Chapter Nine ends the textbook with suggestions for activities and projects. These suggestions are dividing into five categories: group and classroom activities, personal reflection, library research, fieldwork projects, and integrated projects. By placing the activities at the end of *Living Folklore*, the authors maintain the flow of a “good read,” even though the chapters are clearly delineated into subcategories to make the information easier to comprehend. The authors’ stated aim in writing *Living Folklore* is to share enthusiasm for folklore and to give the reader “a sense of the liveliness and immediacy of folklore in our everyday lives as well as at times of celebration and ceremony” (xi). Their examination of the role of folklore throughout many different groups and time periods in a variety of situations does just that.

The definitions and theory throughout the textbook rely upon the works of other scholars as well as the authors’ own research and experience. This allows the readers, who could be from any educational background, to easily identify and study the authoritative source if they wish a more in-depth review of the topic. The material that they provide is clear and succinct with the authors repeatedly supplying the reader’s “natural curiosity” with information for a more in-depth study (xii). Another way that they attempt to inspire a passion for folklore study is by providing a list of professional opportunities and references for further research into job opportunities. Ultimately, the authors state that their goal in writing this book was to “encourage you to see that folklore is not just about time-honored traditions or quaint customs; it is a philosophical approach to understanding people and expressive culture” (xiv). In that, they succeed.

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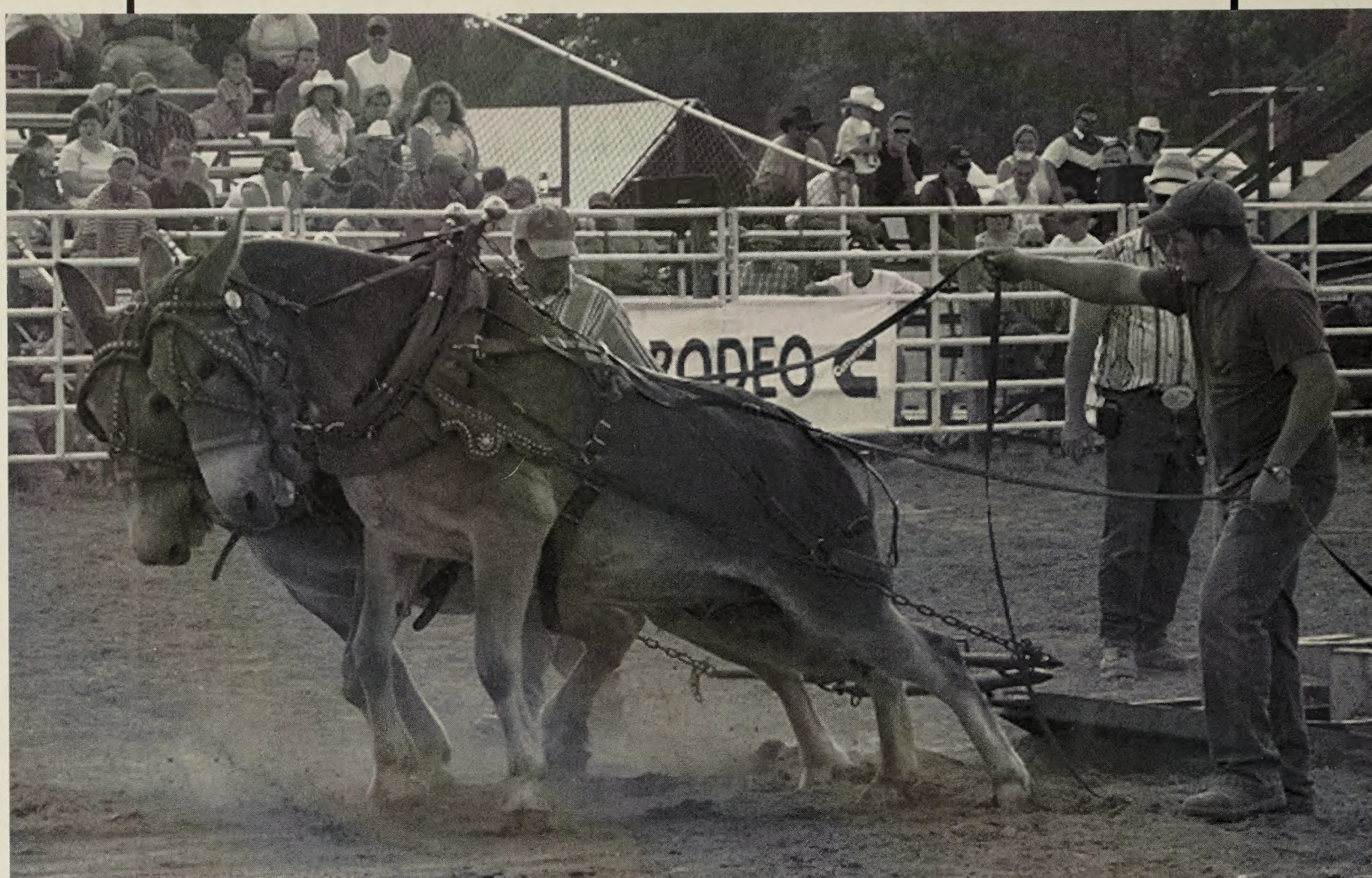
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